

## Virtual internships

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# Virtual Internship Toolkit



What works: Conducting Impactful  
Virtual Internships as a Civic  
University – The Context  
Johannes Read, Connor McFadden, Elizabeth Williams  
July 2022



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# Virtual Internships in Context

- **When conducting virtual internships, and an aim was to maximise the impact on place: How the University of Birmingham can maximise its impact as a civic university.**
- **The following policies were considered by which the university looks to use to make a difference in place:**
  - **HEFi Education Enhancement Collaborative Fund**
  - **UOB Virtual Internships and Student Knowledge Exchange**
  - **Civic University Agreement**
  - **Access and Participation Plans**
  - **Graduate Outcomes Survey**
  - **National Students Survey**
  - **Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)**



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# University Impact in Place

- When conducting virtual internships, and an aim was to maximise the impact on place: How the University of Birmingham can maximise its impact as a civic university.
- The following policies were considered by which the university looks to use to make a difference in place:
  - **HEFi Education Enhancement Collaborative Fund aims**
  - **UoB Virtual Internships and Student Knowledge Exchange**
  - **Civic University Agreement**
  - **Access and Participation Plans**
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# HEFi Education Enhancement Collaborative Fund aims

## HEFi

- HEFi has a mission to support staff in the delivery of innovative and inclusive research-intensive teaching. With this, the aim is to optimise student learning, and prepare them for their futures.
- Since 2010, the UOB has invested in the Education Enhancement Fund (EEF), which is available to staff annually to provide opportunities to carry out projects, enhancing the educational experiences of students. This project was funded through the EEF and links with a range of staff across the university to develop the toolkit which will help develop meaningful virtual internships for students in the future.

## Collaborative fund

- Within the EEF, there is the collaborative fund which gives opportunities to staff to enhance research-intensive learning and teaching practices, providing benefits to students at UOB. Funding up to £8000 can be requested to provide clear benefits to students across the university.



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HEFi

# UOB virtual internships and student knowledge exchange

- In 2021, the UOB and Keele worked together to develop the Student Knowledge Exchange Project. This project was created to remove barriers to engagement between students and organisations.
- The project provides support to the following:
  - **Local internships for international students.**
  - **Bespoke virtual internships.**
  - **Enterprise activities.**
  - **Impact measurement tool.**
- The toolkit developed will benefit students, employees and external businesses to evolve virtual internships in-line with this project, giving them meaningful experiences and enhancing their opportunities to a successful future.



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# Civic University Agreement

- In 2019, UOB reaffirmed its commitment to the city and the West Midlands in pledging to put the economy and quality of life of the community to the top of its priorities. The UOB joined 30 other institutions in doing so, in partnership with the local government.
- UOB has the capability, opportunity and responsibility to support the place where it is based, and by developing this toolkit, this is being accomplished.
- Some issues addressed in this agreement was supporting local businesses to adapt to technological change and improving the education of those in the area.
- Therefore, learning from the difficulties experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, this toolkit will provide assistance to local businesses wishing to conduct virtual internships.



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# Access and Participation Plans

- The UOB commits to widening participation and progress in the objectives of supporting under-represented groups within higher education, which was published in the Access and Participation plan (APP) with the Office for Students (OfS).
- The toolkit will assist these plans, allowing key under-represented groups within UOB to take part in all available internships through working virtually. Working virtually gives flexibility to students, with the flexibility of working from home.
- The sense that applicants who live further away from offices, or do not have the ability to get there offers the potential for a more diverse talent pool.
- The virtual format discussed within the toolkit creates more opportunities to expand boundaries for under-represented groups, even across national boundaries.



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# Graduate Outcome survey and National Student survey

- Graduate outcome surveys and national student surveys are a way of capturing the perspectives and current status of recent graduates, as well as a chance to look back on your higher education experience and have a voice.
- This toolkit works towards assisting students to have the best possible opportunities and experiences within their higher education. The focus groups conducted allowed students to express their student voice, and what they would like to see improved when taking part in virtual internships, working towards better NSS scores.
- The toolkit also helps to improve student career prospects, by gaining valuable work experience and exploring their potential career paths, students will have to a chance to improve their employability prospects, whilst increasing diversity of applicants through the lack of geographic and other barriers.



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GRADUATE  
OUTCOMES

# Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)

- Universities are increasingly focused on capturing knowledge exchange through the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF). Evaluating and linking the knowledge that is exchanged between the students, opportunity providers or businesses, staff expertise, and the broader economy and society can show the impact that the virtual internships have in supporting the KEF.
- **Relating evaluations of virtual internships to KEF metrics in the can support the university's KEF reporting as a whole.**
- **Embedding the KEF reporting in the monitoring and evaluations of the projects can help show the impact that the virtual internships have had for students, businesses, university, and place.**



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