

Lancaster
University



Job Shadowing Guidance for Staff



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What is Job Shadowing

Job shadowing is where an individual from one area of the organisation has the opportunity to experience the role of another, gaining insight into that particular work area.

It can provide an opportunity to work alongside more experienced colleagues so they can learn and develop within their current role. All staff are welcome to access job shadowing opportunities. Please note that accessing job shadowing can only happen at a mutually convenient time.

Why Do Job Shadowing

Job shadowing has many potential benefits for staff and departments within the University helping to improve communication across departments, faculties and sites and encourage continuous improvement. It provides an excellent networking tool for both the guest and host, facilitating the breaking down of any internal barriers across the organisation. Job shadowing also provides a unique opportunity to find out how other staff work and what their roles involve. It develops a deeper knowledge and understanding of other roles and functions within the University.

For the Host

- Network with colleagues from different areas
- Share your experience with others
- Learn from your visitor/guest
- The opportunity to view and reflect on your own area of work supported by the “fresh eyed” view of the guest
- Develop your coaching/mentoring skills

For the guest

- Understand how other departments work
- Learn from the experiences of colleagues
- Understand and appreciate how other roles support the organisation
- Understand and appreciate other needs and priorities outside of your established work role
- The opportunity to discuss your role and its needs and priorities with others
- Understand why things work the way they do

Who is involved in job shadowing

The Line Manager

As part of the PDR process, individuals may discuss job shadowing as either a way of developing their current role or as part of their career development into a different role. The line manager will need to agree with them on what this will look like and how much time can be allowed for this activity.

If the shadowing is to develop them within their current role the line manager may have a view as to who would be the best host for this and arrange the shadowing experience for them. If the shadowing is to benefit their career the line manager may be able to suggest contacts or put them in touch with individuals but the individual will be expected to make the arrangements themselves.

The Host

A host is the person who agrees to be shadowed. This role does involve some preparation and thought and is not just about having someone follow you around for an agreed time span.

A host needs to consider if the time requested is the best time for the shadowing to take place and how long each period of shadowing should be for. They will also need to take into consideration their work obligations and ensure that the shadowing experience does not get in the way of their day-to-day responsibilities.

The Guest

A guest needs to consider why they are doing the shadowing and what they hope to achieve. They will need to do some preparation which will involve working with their line manager or the host prior to the shadowing to set objectives for the sessions. Following the shadowing it's important to review and discuss outcomes and what happens next.

What are the different types of job shadowing

Observation - 'fly on the wall'

As a guest, you will spend the agreed period of time observing the day-to-day work of your host. This may involve a range of activities such as attending meetings, watching interactions with customers, etc. It should be a typical representation of what the host does daily. This type of shadowing works best when a visitor is looking to gain a greater understanding of what the host's job role actually consists of.

Regular Briefings - 'Burst Interactions'

Here a guest will shadow the host for specific activities over a period of time which are all preceded by a mini brief and follow-up debrief. This works best when individuals work near to the host and the host can then advise them of dates and times of specific activities which are of value in understanding the role of the host. This type of shadowing provides short periods of focused activity, rather than passive ongoing observation. However, it needs careful timing and planning if it is not to become disruptive.

Hands On - 'Job Sharing'

This is an extension of the observation model, where the guest starts to undertake some of the tasks they have observed. This provides the visitor/guest with hands-on experience of the role whilst having the safety net of being closely supervised by the host. This is not always possible and would need to be discussed on a case by case basis between the host and the guest.



What do I need to consider before Job Shadowing?

For the host

- When is the best time for a guest to get a good overview of the role?
- What do you need to inform the guest of prior to the shadowing?
- Do you need to let anyone else know that the shadowing is taking place?
- What does the guest hope to get from the process?
- What do you need to know about them?
- Do you need to complete any health & safety requirements prior to the visit?
- Do they have any additional support requirements that you need to be aware of?

For the guest

- What do you want to know about the job?
- What questions do you want to ask?
- What do you want to know about the team department?
- Are there any specific tasks or elements of the job you would like to see above all others?
- What do you know already about this job/department/team?
- Are there any special requirements (such as dress code)?
- Do you have any additional support requirements that they need to be aware of?



What are the responsibilities of the guest/host

A guest should:

- Provide the host with an outline of what they are expecting from the shadowing prior to the shadowing taking place
- Show tact, discretion and awareness and if required withdraw from situations when circumstances deem it appropriate
- Provide your host with feedback and reflections on what you have observed
- Ensure that your work colleagues back on the “day job” are aware of your absence and what cover is required
- Learn as much as you can prior to the shadowing, for example, reviewing the job description and person specification and talking to others you know who do this role
- Whilst on the shadowing take lots of notes. Reflecting on these notes following the experience will allow you to maximise your learning
- Once you have returned to your own department, follow up with an update with your own line manager, sharing your experience and learning, highlighting any changes in practice that may result and anything for sharing with your wider team.

A host should

- Provide the guest with a timetable for when the shadowing will take place
- Agree a suitable time dependent on the visitor’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 and 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 canceled or changed in any way
- Provide constructive feedback to the guest

Reflection

For you and your line manager to reflect on and record

- How has this job shadowing enhanced your personal/ career development?
- How has this job shadowing affected your/your team's performance?
- Did you feedback to your team?

For you to reflect on and record

- How has this job shadowing enhanced your personal/ career development?
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- Did you feedback to your team?

For you and your host to reflect on and record

- What did you get from the experience of working with the host?
- What concerns or questions have arisen as a result of the experience?
- Did the experience answer the questions you were looking to answer?

