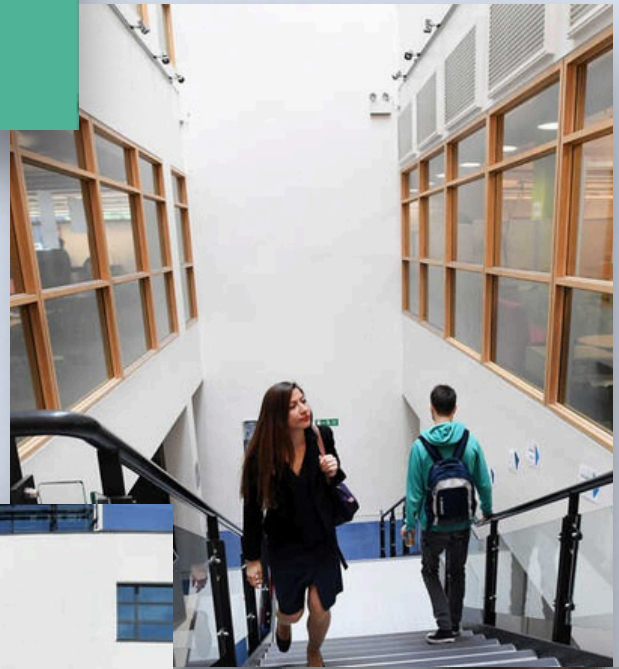


Self-employed Placement

Experience becoming your own boss



Scan here

Are you thinking of starting your own business, social enterprise or being self-employed? Instead of undertaking an industrial placement, you could be your own boss!

A self-employed placement gives you the opportunity to spend your placement period developing your own business or self-employed activity while gaining valuable entrepreneurial and professional experience.

You will have dedicated time to explore your idea, develop your skills, test your business model and work towards your business goals, with support from the Brunel Entrepreneur Hub (Part of Brunel Careers at Student Professional Development).

This alternative placement option is available for both thick sandwich placements (a continuous 9 to 12-month block) and thin sandwich placements (two separate blocks of roughly 3 to 6 months each spread across your studies).

A self-employed placement is a serious commitment. You will be responsible for managing your time, meeting your placement learning outcomes and supporting yourself financially throughout the year.

What could you gain?

- Dedicated time to develop your business or self-employed activity
- Practical experience of running a business
- Opportunities to develop your entrepreneurial, professional and commercial skills
- Experience of areas such as marketing, finance, sales, operations and customer development
- Access to Entrepreneur Hub support, events and expertise
- Evidence of initiative, independence and commercial awareness to discuss with future employers or clients
- The opportunity to explore whether entrepreneurship could form part of your future career

What would you miss?

Unlike a traditional employed placement, you may not have:

- A workplace team or colleagues
- A regular salary
- A line manager or employer providing day-to-day direction
- The same access to an established organisation's systems and resources
- A traditional employer reference

You should carefully consider whether a self-employed placement is the right option for you before applying.

Placement commitment

- You will be expected to work full time on your business or self-employed activity. Please note, for thick sandwich placements, this is for a minimum of 30 weeks during the placement year.
- You will be expected to meet the agreed placement learning outcomes and any academic deadlines including module assessments.
- You will also be expected to participate in relevant Brunel Entrepreneur Hub training recommended to support your entrepreneurial journey, including workshops, potential mentoring opportunities, and other development activities. In addition, you will be required to submit one-page progress reports each term and attend monthly group progress review meetings.

Is it right for you?

A self-employed placement can be an exciting and rewarding way to spend your placement year, but it is different from a traditional employed placement. You should be prepared to take responsibility for your own work, development, finances and business decisions.

Before you apply, ask yourself:

- Do I have a clear business or self-employment idea?
- Have I researched the market, customers and competition?
- Am I prepared to work independently and manage my own time?
- Can I demonstrate that the activity is realistic and achievable?
- Do I understand the financial commitment involved?
- Can I support myself financially throughout the placement year?
- Am I prepared to respond to setbacks and adapt my idea when necessary?
- Can I meet the placement learning outcomes agreed with my department?
- Am I legally permitted to undertake self-employed or business activity in the UK? Find further details about this on page 6.

"Whether your business succeeds or not, the experience will provide valuable learning that can help you decide whether running your own business is right for you."
Entrepreneur Hub

How does the process work?

Step 1

Speak to your department

Discuss your plans with your placement convenor or relevant departmental contact within your academic course to check that a self-employed placement is available and appropriate for your course.

Step 2

Notify your Placement Advisor at the SPD

Contact your placement advisor within the Student Professional Development (SPD) team and discuss your plans.

Step 3

Contact the Brunel Entrepreneur Hub at the SPD

Your placement advisor will connect you with the Entrepreneur Hub to arrange a 1-1 appointment to discuss your idea, your plans and whether a self-employed placement could be appropriate for you.

Step 4

Complete the online application

If appropriate, the Brunel Entrepreneur Hub will invite you to complete the Self-employed Placement Application Form.

Step 5

Application review

Your application will be reviewed by the Brunel Entrepreneur Hub. You may be asked for additional information or to discuss your proposal further.

Step 6

Placement approval

If your application is approved, you will need to complete the relevant placement approval form (PAF). This will be shared by your placement advisor at the SPD.

Step 7

Complete your placement

Once your PAF has been approved and all other required approvals are in place, you can begin your placement. You will remain responsible for meeting your placement requirements and participating in the support and review activities required by the Brunel Entrepreneur Hub.

Please note, your placement is not automatically approved! Submitting an application does not guarantee approval. The Brunel Entrepreneur Hub and relevant University teams will consider whether your proposed activity is appropriate for a placement and whether it provides sufficient educational and professional value.

SUPPORT, ELIGIBILITY AND YOUR BUSINESS IDEA

What support is available?

The Brunel Entrepreneur Hub can support you throughout your entrepreneurial journey.

During your self-employed placement, support may include:

- 1:1 consultations with Brunel Entrepreneur Hub consultants
- Access to external expertise in areas such as Marketing, IP and Finance
- Workshops, competitions and entrepreneurial events
- Guidance, resources and signposting to relevant opportunities
- Opportunities to connect with other entrepreneurs and the wider entrepreneurial community

Funding or bursary opportunities may also be available from time to time. These are not guaranteed and may have separate eligibility criteria.

Eligibility

To apply for a self-employed placement, you must:

- Be eligible to undertake a placement as part of your degree
- Be able to meet the agreed placement learning outcomes
- Complete any required module assessments
- Demonstrate a viable business or self-employment plan
- Commit to working full time on your business or self-employed activity for the full placement period
- Not undertake more than 15 hours per week of other paid employment during the placement, where permitted by your circumstances
- Be able to financially support yourself throughout the placement
- Have an appropriate contingency or fallback plan where required

Is every business idea eligible?

No. Your proposed activity must be appropriate for a University placement and must provide sufficient educational, ethical and financial value.

The University may decline proposals that are inappropriate, dangerous, unlawful, unethical, contrary to University policy or otherwise unsuitable for a placement. Examples may include illegal activities, unlicensed activities, gambling, weapons, inappropriate adult content, get-rich-quick schemes and multi-level marketing schemes. If you are unsure whether your idea is appropriate, speak to the Brunel Entrepreneur Hub before committing significant time or money to it.

Progress reviews

You will be required to participate in Brunel Entrepreneur Hub progress reviews and provide regular updates or evidence of your business progress throughout the placement.

Can international students apply?

Eligibility depends on your immigration status and the conditions attached to your permission to stay in the UK.

Students holding a Student visa are normally not permitted to be self-employed or engage in business activity.

If you are an international student, you must check your immigration status and seek appropriate immigration advice before applying. The University cannot confirm your individual immigration status or provide immigration advice.

Intellectual property and group projects

The Brunel Entrepreneur Hub provides general educational and informational guidance but cannot provide legal advice on complex intellectual property matters.

If your business idea involves work created as part of a group project, research, an industry-sponsored project, a placement, internship or work involving external collaborators, you should make sure you understand who owns the relevant intellectual property and whether you have permission to use or commercialise it.

Where appropriate, seek independent legal advice before sharing, publishing, exhibiting, disclosing or commercialising work that may have commercial value.

APPLYING FOR A SELF-EMPLOYED PLACEMENT

What will you be asked?

Following your initial one-to-one session, the Brunel Entrepreneur Hub will send you a link to the online application form if this placement is considered a suitable option for you.

The online application is designed to help you demonstrate that you have carefully considered your business idea and are prepared for the commitment involved in undertaking a self-employed placement.

To help you prepare, please use the question guide below to draft your answers before copying and pasting them into the online application form. The questions are presented in the same order as they appear on the form.

About you

- Full name
- Student ID
- Course
- Placement Convenor (From your academic department)
- Placement Advisor (From the SPD - Student Professional Development team)
- Telephone
- Email address

Your skills and experience

- What skills, knowledge, experience or achievements do you have that will help you develop your business or self-employed activity? Consider your academic experience, employment, volunteering, extracurricular activities, technical skills and other relevant experience.

Your idea

- What is your business or self-employment idea? Explain clearly what you will offer, who your customers or clients are and what problem your product or service will solve.
- If relevant, please provide any additional information about your business idea that you would like to share. For example, if you are already developing or working on your idea, please include details of any existing social media platforms, websites, or other online presence associated with the business.

What have you done so far?

- What actions have you already taken to develop your idea? For example, you might have undertaken market research, spoken to potential customers, developed a prototype, made initial sales, created a website or tested your idea.

What support do you need?

- What areas would you like support with during your placement? Think about areas such as marketing, finance, intellectual property, sales, operations, customer development and business planning.

Financial planning

How will you financially support yourself throughout the placement year? Explain how you intend to meet your personal living costs as well as any relevant business costs. *Remember that a self-employed placement does not provide a guaranteed salary.*

Time commitment

- How will you structure your time and ensure that you are working full time on your business or self-employed activity? Explain how you will manage your workload and meet your placement requirements.

Your plans after the placement

- What do you hope to achieve by the end of the placement and what are your plans afterwards? You might intend to continue the business, return to your studies, seek employment, develop another venture or pursue another career direction.

STUDENT EXPERIENCES

ANDREA SOTERIOU| Design (BA)



Moonjuice Productions - Freelance photography and videography

"I have loved being a freelancer during my placement year as it's provided me with the opportunity to experience what my career could involve after this course and helped me gain confidence with my craft, by making connections and expanding my skills, before entering the working world as a graduate."

CHLOE-ANNE CORTES DELLIPIANI | Creative Writing BA (Hons)



Clickbait Media - Media agency, specialising in digital marketing, branding and website design

"My self-employed placement year has provided me with a unique experience whereby I was allowed to independently start and run my own business, but I still had the support I needed from the Entrepreneur Hub. Reality hit us hard, but this experience forces you to learn on the job and you grow so much personally and professionally. It really is a sink or swim situation, but the team at Brunel are always on hand to help you, support you and provide much needed advice. If you want to run your own business, this is the placement for you."

ED CRAY| Product Design Engineering (BSc)



Sheddie Designs - Sustainable product and furniture design

"My advice to students wanting to undertake an entrepreneur placement is to go for it! It is a fantastic thing to do and really shows you're willing to work hard and take responsibility for your own success! I am extremely pleased with how everything went and do feel this placement option met my expectations. The Brunel Entrepreneur Hub was instrumental in giving me the support and encouragement I needed along the way."

JACKSON DAVIS | Electronic & Electrical Engineering (BSc)



Davis and Friend - Film and design agency

"It was incredibly rewarding to have the Brunel Entrepreneur Hub behind me when I started my self-employed placement. I think it's an incredibly forward-thinking level of support that allows students to explore options outside of traditional employment. It was very reassuring that we could seek advice that was specific and contextual to our business, instead of trying to navigate through endless amounts of information online. It was also incredibly helpful being linked with several schemes that offer funding for small businesses - while cash is useful, so is the experience of pitching to potential investors."

PATRICK GEIDER | Digital Media (BSc)



Freelance holistic design specialist

"I developed more during my self-employed placement than at any other time in my professional career. The independence pushed me to grow across the board and resulted in opportunities that wouldn't be possible in a conventional role."

Will Hyde | Digital Media (BSc)



Freelance graphic, motion and website design

"My experience has been nothing but positive. I can't recommend it enough. The staff from the entrepreneur hub are utterly supportive. Their expertise and knowledge helped me have the confidence to take on this new challenge."

Zain Al-Nadiri | Computer Science (BSc)



Connectops Ltd - Business Process Automation using AI

"I really enjoyed the programme this year, all the support and assistance given."

What can you learn?

A self-employed placement can help you develop skills that are valuable whether you ultimately become an entrepreneur or work for an established organisation.

You may develop experience in:

CUSTOMER DEVELOPMENT

Understanding customer needs, testing ideas and responding to feedback.

MARKETING

Building awareness, communicating your value proposition and reaching customers.

FINANCE

Understanding costs, pricing, cash flow and financial decision-making.

SALES

Presenting your product or service and developing relationships with customers.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Planning work, prioritising tasks and delivering against deadlines.

PROBLEM SOLVING

Identifying challenges, testing solutions and adapting your approach.

RESILIENCE

Learning from setbacks and responding to change.

SELF-MANAGEMENT

Taking responsibility for your time, decisions and professional development.

Remember...a self-employed placement is not simply about whether your business succeeds commercially.

It is also an opportunity to develop your skills, test your assumptions, learn from experience and understand more about yourself as a professional.

Test. Learn. Adapt. Develop.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR PLACEMENT

Your placement, your responsibility

A self-employed placement gives you freedom and flexibility, but it also requires discipline and commitment.

You will be responsible for:

- Setting and reviewing your goals
- Managing your time
- Keeping appropriate records of your activity and progress
- Developing your business or self-employed activity
- Meeting your placement learning outcomes
- Participating in required Entrepreneur Hub activities and progress reviews
- Managing your personal finances
- Understanding and complying with any relevant legal, regulatory, tax, licensing or professional requirements
- Seeking appropriate specialist advice where necessary

Don't wait until you have everything figured out

Your business idea may change during the placement. You might discover that your target customer is different from the one you originally identified. Your pricing might change. You might decide to change your product or service — or even develop a completely new idea.

This is part of the learning process.

Use your placement to test assumptions, gather evidence, learn from customers and make informed decisions.

Use the support available

The Brunel Entrepreneur Hub is there to help you develop your entrepreneurial skills and navigate challenges. Make use of consultations, workshops, events and specialist support where relevant.

However, the Hub cannot replace professional legal, tax, accounting, immigration or other specialist advice where that advice is required.

Protect your work

Think carefully about intellectual property, confidentiality, data protection and agreements with collaborators or clients.

If you are developing an idea based on work created at Brunel, make sure you understand the relevant ownership and permission requirements before sharing or commercialising it.

Your placement is part of your degree

Your self-employed placement is still a placement.

You must meet the requirements set by your course and the relevant University placement teams, as well as the requirements agreed with the Brunel Entrepreneur Hub.

By the end of the year, aim to be able to explain:

- What you set out to achieve
- What you actually achieved
- What you learned
- What changed and why
- What evidence you gathered
- How your skills developed
- What you would do differently
- What your next steps will be

These reflections can become valuable evidence of your professional development when applying for graduate jobs, further study, funding or future business opportunities.

READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

Talk to the Brunel Entrepreneur Hub

If you are considering a self-employed placement, don't wait until you have a perfect business plan.

Start by discussing your idea with the Entrepreneur Hub.

The team can help you understand whether a self-employed placement could be appropriate for you and what you need to consider before applying.

CONTACT US



Hub@brunel.ac.uk



Students.brunel.ac.uk/career/be-your-own-boss



[Brunel-entrepreneur-hub](#)



[@Brunelunispd](#)



[Brunel-hub](#)



Before you apply, make sure you have considered:

- Whether a self-employed placement is appropriate for your course
- Your business or self-employment idea
- Your target customers or clients
- Your market and competitors
- How you will generate income
- Your expected costs
- How you will support yourself financially
- How you will manage your time
- Your placement learning outcomes
- Your contingency or fallback plan
- Any intellectual property or ownership issues
- Any legal, regulatory or licensing requirements
- Whether your immigration status permits self-employment or business activity

Important information

- Approval of a self-employed placement is not automatic.
- You must obtain all required University approvals before starting your placement.
- The University reserves the right not to support a proposed placement where it considers the activity inappropriate or not sufficiently educationally, ethically or financially advantageous.
- The information in this guide is intended to support your application and does not replace professional legal, tax, immigration or other specialist advice.

**Start your journey... Have an idea? Want to test it? Ready to learn?
Speak to the Brunel Entrepreneur Hub.**