INCLUSION | EXCELLENCE | ENGAGEMENT | CREATIVITY | COLLEGIALITY | INTEGRITY

Job Shadowing at
University College Dublin

Supporting your professional growth and development

UCD DUBLIN

BREAKING BOUNDARIES

STRATEGY TO

2030

"As an inclusive community and an integrated organisation, UCD will be a place where potential is realised".

ONE UCD

Job Shadowing at UCD

What is Job Shadowing?

Job shadowing is a voluntary development opportunity that enables individuals to observe and experience different roles, responsibilities and workplace environments across our diverse University. This structured yet informal initiative which is arranged locally is designed to support the professional growth and development of UCD employees.

The duration of a job shadowing experience can range from a half-day to a maximum of three days per 12-month period. Job shadowing can take place in any school or unit, provided that clear objectives are established to support its selection. It can occur between individuals of the same grade or across different grades.

Who's involved in Job Shadowing?

There are three key individuals involved in job shadowing:

- The 'Observer' (the individual participating in the shadowing opportunity)
- The 'Host' (the individual being shadowed)
- Line Manager (Manager(s) of the Observer and Host)

Job Shadowing Principles at
UCD

Job shadowing can be a valuable experience for all parties involved, providing the following key principles are considered:

- **Mutual Agreement:** The job shadowing opportunity should be mutually agreed by the observer, host, and their respective line managers.
- **Clear Timelines:** Specific timelines should be set and agreed by all parties involved. The duration can range from a half-day to a maximum of three days per 12-month period.
- **Role Suitability**: Not all roles or aspects of a role may be suitable for job shadowing. The team or unit Manager of the Host facilitating the job shadowing experience will evaluate the request to determine its appropriateness.
- **Accessibility:** Ensure accessibility and additional support requirements are provided to ensure an inclusive environment.
- **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality must be maintained, throughout and after the experience, as appropriate to the nature of the role and activities.
- **Respect:** Be mindful of everyone's time, responsibilities, and workplace environment.
- **Compliance with Regulations:** Ensure all relevant health and safety protocols, ethical standards, IT and GDPR-related requirements are followed.

Benefits of Job Shadowing

Job shadowing is a mutually beneficial activity that supports professional growth, fosters collaboration, and enhances organisational resilience. Below are the benefits for all parties involved:

Observer Benefits include

- Develops knowledge, skills and capabilities.
- Provides networking opportunities.
- Offers insights into potential career paths.

Host Benefits include

- Provides an opporunity to mentor and guide.
- Refines communication skills and encourages self-reflection.
- Recognises the host's expertise within the organisation.

Line Manager Benefits include

- Facilitates staff development and talent spotting.
- Encourages innovation and operational efficiency.

University Benefits include

- Promotes collaboration, talent retention, and succession planning.
- Strengthens organisational adaptability and resilience.

Approaches to Job Shadowing

Observation (primary option)

Primarily job shadowing consists of the observer spending an agreed amount of time observing the day-to-day activities of the host. This approach is beneficial for those seeking to gain a deeper understanding of a specific role. For example, if someone wishes to explore a new career path but is unsure about the activities of a role, job shadowing offers an opportunity to explore it further.

Regular Briefings (where appropriate)

Where appropriate, the observer may shadow the host for specific tasks or activities over a set period. This approach works best when the observer and host work in close proximity, allowing the host to inform the observer of relevant dates and times for shadowing sessions. Unlike continuous observation, this approach focuses on short bursts of targeted activities and requires careful scheduling to avoid disruptions to the host's workflow.

Hands On (dependent on activities/roles)

Here the observer begins to actively participate in tasks they have observed. Under the supervision of the host, the observer gains practical, hands-on experience in the role. While this approach offers valuable learning opportunities, it may not be suitable for all roles and activities. Each case should be discussed with the observer, host and their manager to ensure it is appropriate for the specific role.

Roles and Responsibilites

Line Manager of the Observer

The line manager supports and coordinates the job shadowing experience to align with the observer's development goals.

Support and Approval:

- Support the observer in defining clear objectives, whether skills and/or knowledge, with a focus on both professional and personal development.
- Ensure the shadowing experience aligns with developmental goals.
- Approve time away from regular duties for the observer.
- Ensure any cover, if required, for the observer's absence is in place.

Coordination:

- Support in identifying relevant shadowing opportunities and potential hosts.
- Contact the line manager of a potential host and request a job shadowing experience.
- Ensure accessibility needs and additional support, as well as health and safety, ethical standards and GDPR-related requirements have been considered and provided.

Post-Shadowing:

- Debrief with the observer after the shadowing experience to discuss insights and outcomes.
- Provide guidance on how to apply the learnings to the observer's current role or future career development, if appropriate.

Roles and Responsibilites

Observer

The observer is responsible for making the most of the shadowing experience by being prepared, professional, and engaged.

Pre-Shadowing Preparation:

- Define clear objectives and expected outcomes to share with the host before the job shadowing experience.
- Research the role or team in advance to ensure a basic understanding.
- Discuss any health, safety, accessibility and additional support requirements with the host beforehand to ensure appropriate accommodations are provided.
- Plan your workload and responsibilities ahead of time before participating in a job shadowing experience to ensure there is no disruption to the operational needs and priorities of your role.

During Shadowing:

- Be punctual, professional, and respectful of the host's time, responsibilities and work environment. Inform the host of any changes in availability.
- Maintain confidentiality and discretion at all times. Step away if required, such as in situations involving personal or confidential matters.
- Use the opportunity to ask questions and engage in discussions, if appropriate. The observer is responsible for their own learning.
- Take notes to capture key insights and observations for later reflection.
- Refrain from influencing or interrupting the work of the person being shadowed, as well as that of the wider team.

Post-Shadowing:

- Reflect on the experience and evaluate what you have learned.
- Share key insights with your line manager and establish whether these met the agreed objectives and expected outcomes.
- Consider how to apply new knowledge or skills to your current role or development goals.
- Offer reflections and feedback to the host about the shadowing experience, if appropriate.

Roles and Responsibilites

Host
The host is responsible for facilitating the shadowing experience and providing the observer with meaningful insights into their role.

Pre-Shadowing Preparation:
- Create a schedule or timetable for the shadowing session(s) based on the observer's objectives and your own responsibilities.
- Identify key tasks, activities, or events that will offer the observer valuable insights.
- Brief colleagues about the shadowing arrangement, if necessary.
- Prepare a dedicated workspace or area for the observer.
- Discuss and accommodate accessibility needs and additional support, as well as health and safety, ethical standards and GDPR-related requirements.

During shadowing:
- Provide an overview of your role, team and workplace culture.
- Share your experience and insights related to your specialist subject area.
- Show interest in the observer, encourage and answer questions and clarify any queries during or after shadowing session(s).
- Introduce the observer to the team, this helps the Observer feel welcomed and provides context (for all parties) on who they'll be interacting with.
- Notify the observer of any changes to the agreed schedule or cancellations as early as possible.
- Ensure the shadowing experience does not interfere with your regular responsibilities and daily tasks.