

# THE HIRING MANAGER'S GUIDEBOOK

Change the game with the award-winning STEM Returners formula.



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## What is the STEM Returners Programme and why has your organisation signed up to it?

STEM Returners, in partnership with Women's Engineering Society, partners with forward-thinking employers to attract highly skilled returners back after a career break and enables highly qualified and experienced candidates to restart their career in a supported way.

This handbook is designed to support hiring managers and workplace mentors on their journey, welcoming a STEM Returner into your team.

STEM Returners, WES and our partner employers share a common objective of increasing the representation of underrepresented groups in STEM and ensuring that those who have left STEM are able to return to a flexible, supported, and inclusive environment.

We also support degree qualified engineers who are struggling to start their career and face the same barriers as our career break returners.

### The STEM Returners programme seeks to achieve the following:

- Increase the number of mid- senior career engineers
- Increase the number of female engineers and engineers from ethnically diverse backgrounds
- Attract and re-train engineers from other industries
- Engage the majority in understanding the benefits of diversity and inclusion
- Raise awareness of the impact of unconscious bias and how to mitigate its effects
- Promote good practice in inclusive recruitment

### Have you hired a STEM Returner to join your team?

Every STEM Returner has a different story to tell about what brought them to take part in the program.

As with new starters from standard recruitment channels, the level of support a STEM Returner will need to feel welcomed, supported and able to flourish in your workplace, will vary. Here's some Ideas to Reflect Upon and some Practical Advice for Supporting your STEM Returner and welcoming them into your workplace!



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THE MORE  
REFLECTIVE  
YOU ARE  
THE MORE  
EFFECTIVE  
YOU ARE

## Reflecting on leading by example – Inclusive and diverse teams

Use reflection as a tool to power your diversity and inclusion practice.

### Points to reflect on:

- ⦿ Do you remember how you felt on the first day of your current job?
- ⦿ Have you ever returned to work after a career break, for any reason?
- ⦿ How do you think it would feel to Return to Work after a Career break?
- ⦿ What makes an Inclusive Leader?

Empathy is another powerful tool you can use when onboarding a returner.

Putting yourself in their shoes when addressing these points will allow you to further develop the inclusive environment in your workplace.

Self-reflection can be used to help leaders stay motivated and remain effective.

When taking time to self-reflect you are looking inwards. This helps to build two components to emotional intelligence: self-awareness and self-regulation. Self-awareness gives you the ability to understand your emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values and goals, and recognize their impact on others you are leading.

Self-regulation involves the ability to control or redirect your disruptive emotions and impulses and adapt to changing circumstances. Building these emotional intelligence components will improve your leadership.

(Executive Velocity, 2019)

## The model for inclusive leadership

Inclusive leaders have a range of traits that make their leadership progressive and cooperative.

Inclusive leadership is all about inclusion. Leaders who follow this style establish an environment where team members participate in decision making, with a safe space for alternative opinions improving efficiency and work.

### **Inclusive leadership behaviours:**

- Visible Commitment
- Humility
- Awareness of bias
- Curiosity about others
- Cultural Intelligence
- Effective Collaboration

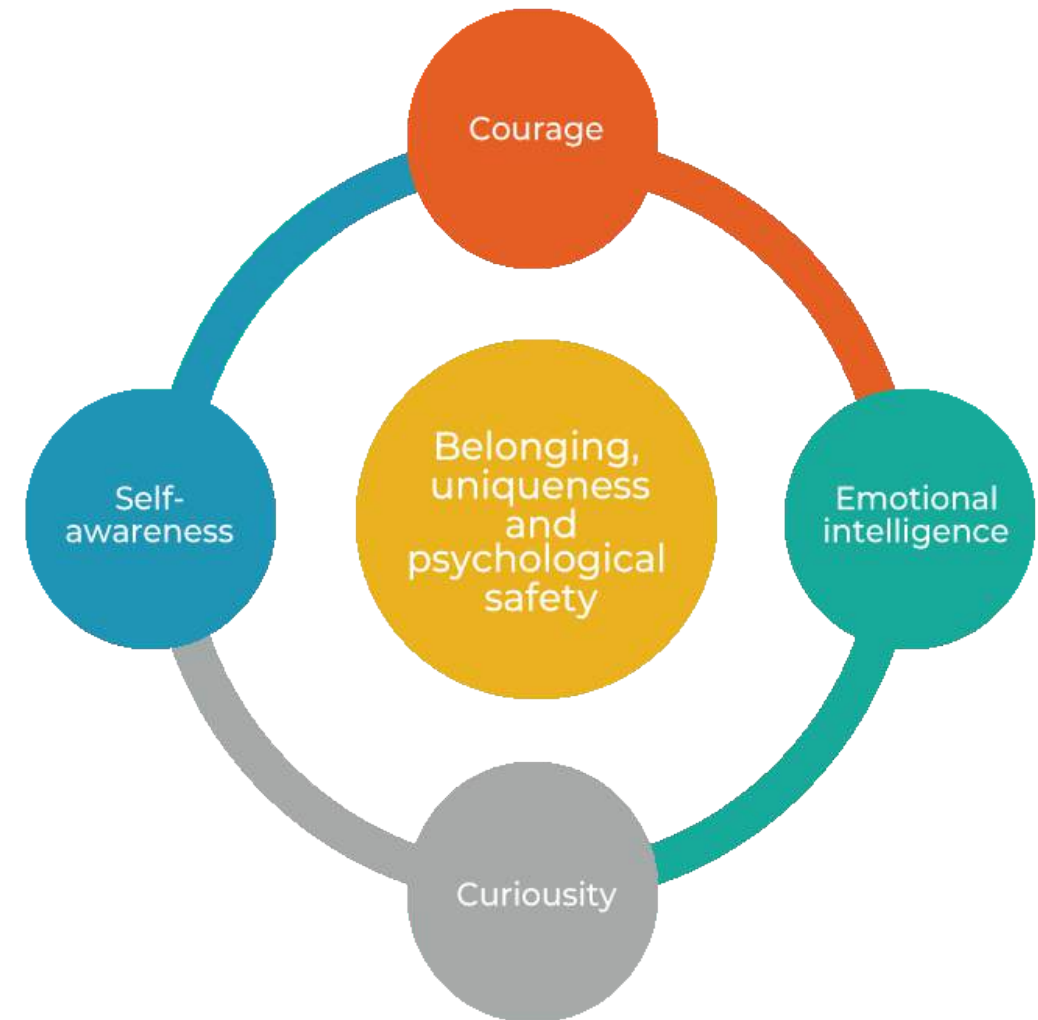
On the right is a diagram that illustrates the traits at the centre of inclusive leadership and how they provide a foundation for belonging, uniqueness and psychological safety

Built on the foundation are the four behaviours of an inclusive leader; courage, emotional intelligence, curiosity and self-awareness.

(Inclusive Employers, 2021)



*These behaviours are vital to establishing an inclusive and diverse team at your organisation.*



## Supporting your STEM Returner – Onboarding and through their Returnship (GOV.UK, 2018)

Providing a strong framework of support is vital to the experience of the returner and the success of the programme.

### **Set clear objectives**

Make sure that the returner understands their targets, timeframes, how success will be measured and the process for ongoing recruitment

### **Provide regular interaction and feedback**

Ask line managers to schedule regular meetings with the returner to discuss what they are doing well and how they could improve.

This will help them be clear about what is expected of them, as well as providing an opportunity for them to ask any questions.

### **Make connections**

Help the returner settle into their job and build strong networks by introducing them to key stakeholders in the early weeks.

### **Adjust support through the transition period**

Adjust the level and type of support you offer as the returner re-integrates.

### **Train line managers in how to support returners**

Offer line managers specific training on how best to support a returner.

This should include the structure and objectives of the programme, common concerns felt by returners and how best to provide support through the first few months.

These are the key support elements that you should consider:

#### **Line manager**

As discussed above, a supportive line manager is critical to the success of any returner programme.

#### **Programme manager**

Make one or two relatively senior people responsible for your returner programme. They should act as primary contacts for the returners, manage the internal organisation and take responsibility for resolving any issues.

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#### **Human resources**

Introduce the returner to their key HR contact(s) as early as possible in the programme.

#### **Buddy**

Appoint a 'buddy' for each returner: a peer or junior who can help with day-to-day questions as the returners re-integrate.

#### **Mentor**

Allocate a mentor who can advise about organisational culture and values, help them to resolve any internal conflicts and provide longer-term career management support.

#### **Allies**

Identify and introduce other supporters in the business, such as leaders of women's or parent and carer networks.

#### **Networking**

Provide networking opportunities with other returners, colleagues and leaders in the business.



## Make your STEM Returner feel connected to your workplace culture, through positive onboarding

Employees are more likely to invest themselves personally in a company's success if they feel aligned with the business. This starts by understanding the culture. It's essential to get your STEM Returner involved in your company's culture on day one.

The best way to do this is for the Returner to spend time with employees from different areas of the business with various levels of seniority, where possible and get stuck into the team they will be working with for the duration of the Returners Program.

Likewise, implementing a buddy system ensures your new starter has someone to talk to, which is so important in the first nerve-wracking weeks of a new job.

### **Mission, vision and goals**

If you want your STEM Returner to embody the company's mission, vision and values, then you need to share this as part of your onboarding process and show them where the business is headed.

It's equally important for everyone to understand their own goals and how they relate to the big picture.

Communicating the goals of their role during the onboarding process will help STEM Returners focus their efforts towards achieving them. Just because your STEM Returner is embarking on a set period of time with you initially, it's still important to make them feel connected to your organisational culture and part of the bigger picture!

Getting to know all the new faces and personalities in a business can seem daunting at first. Your role is to help the STEM Returner settle into their new team and get to know the clients, colleagues, managers, etc. they will work with so that they become recognised and integrate naturally.



## STEM Returners' onboarding is a process

If you're going to ace first impressions, you need to start your onboarding process well before day one. Beyond the onboarding pack, it's important to think about how you're going to immerse your STEM Returner into your company culture and instil in them the knowledge and behaviours that will lead to their long-term success. Here's some practical ideas to help you create an onboarding process that helps your new employees get off to a flying start.

### Here are a checklist of ideas to consider before an employee's first day:

Prepare your new employee's work area and office space and equip it with supplies

Order appropriate access keys/security cards and make sure they work

Arrange for parking, if required

Send out any equipment and technology for remote employees via a courier

Give them details about any remote working allowances  
Technology Access

Order technology equipment (computer, iPad, phone) and software

Set up their system in advance and assign them to a printer

Arrange for access to common drives

Add their name to relevant email lists  
General Communications

Share the news about the STEM Returner with everyone in the business so everyone's ready for their introduction

It's a good idea to share something personal about your STEM Returner such as their love of coffee or their favourite sports team. In this way, other employees have something they can use to break the ice with them when they meet.

Assign a buddy or mentor the new hire can rely on to show them the ropes and answer their questions, even show them the best place to grab lunch  
First Day

Have a small gift waiting for them such as your company t-shirt, mug or keychain

Give them a tour of the office or workplace and introduce them to key team members

If you haven't already given them an onboarding pack before they started, make sure you present it on their first day, and give them time to complete the paperwork over the week ahead

Meet with them and their manager to explain the expectations of their role

The STEM Returner needs to know what they're supposed to be doing, and how that contributes to the company bottom-line

Have their manager assign any simple tasks

Take them out for lunch with their manager and buddy or mentor





## Our five top tips for supporting returners in your organisation

### Clearly defined expectations during the returners programme

Set out performance and learning goals. By clearly managing the expectations, you provide certainty to your new employee as to what he or she needs to achieve to pass the probation period.

### Regular meetings

Regularly check in with your new hire to get a real sense of how they're progressing. This gives your new employee every opportunity to raise questions about the business and their role.

At the same time, you get to see their attitude and personality up close which will help you make a call on whether they're a good fit with the other staff members and your company culture

### Real work

Sounds obvious, but if you don't give your new hire suitably challenging work during their probationary period, how can you possibly assess whether they are right for the role

### Mentoring

By providing a mentor you can help new employees better get used to your company's working environment. With ready access to an experienced colleague, they know who to turn to for advice and information and support. This helps improve their self-confidence and ability to meet expectations.

### Effective completion

We recommend meeting with your STEM Returner in a pre-planned and clear 'end of Program meeting' Decide about if you want to retain your STEM Returner or not and communicate this clearly. Reflecting on the experience of supporting your Returner will be important.

Learning lessons from the Project to help you in the future. Our goal is that the Returnership has gone well and has been mutually rewarding.

Time to onboard your STEM Returner as a fully-fledged recruit! At this point negotiations around salary,

can be discussed, just the same as standard recruitment channels when a new hire is offered a role.

If the decision has been made not to offer a role to the Returner, this needs to be communicated just as clearly. The Returner will have CV worthy assignments and new, relevant work experience to call upon in future interviews or work Programs. We are proud to say that 96 per cent of our industry returners are retained in their permanent roles.

# TIPS FOR SUPPORTING YOUR RETURNERS

### How do we Support your STEM Returner and you?

Your STEM Returner will be supported by us, alongside the provisions you have available to them.

These include mentoring, one to one coaching sessions, eLearning and group sessions with other STEM Returners to share feelings and ideas. These are provided by our excellent partners and are free to returners for 12 months from the start of their Returnership.

*Support from your organisation and the programme are key to providing a safe, inclusive environment.*

# How we can help support your returners cohort

## You will have free support from us at STEM Returners in:

- Interviewing Returners
- How to approach the 12-week program
- Managing the permanent offer process
- Working with their STEM Returner in the first year.

Our team are all experienced Recruitment Professionals are Chartered Institute of Management – Leading Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Trained to degree standard.

In addition, if hiring managers and mentors need a little extra support, we can offer training sessions with Emma Waltham - Maternity Returners in the form of Consultancy, Webinars and Workshops, eLearning Resources and Toolkits and 1 to 1 coaching, in areas such as understanding Unconscious Bias and integrating Industry Returners into your team.

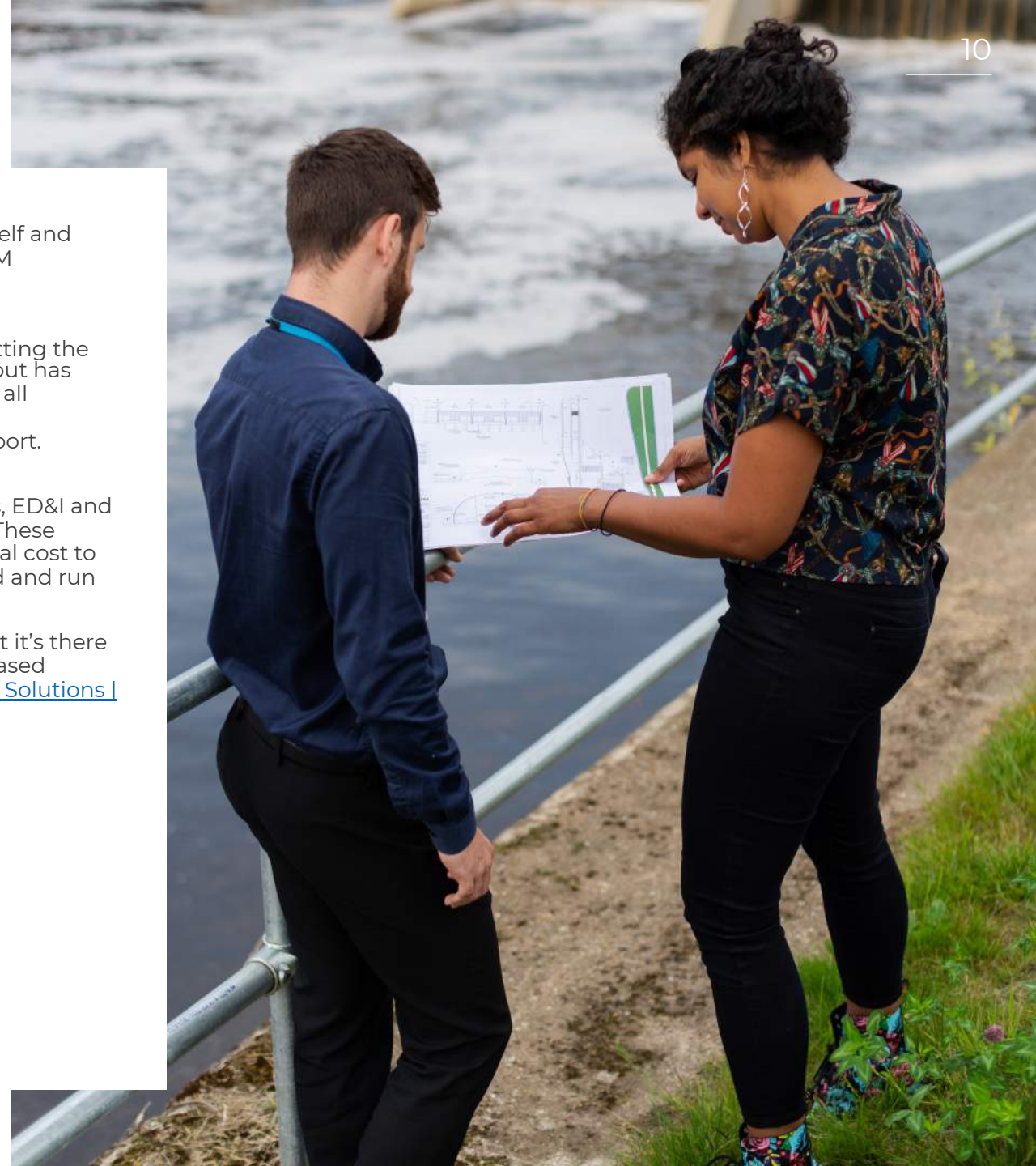
Why not tap into training toolkits and support, create a 'Lunch and Learn' Group for your team or access to

online sessions, to prepare yourself and your team to welcome your STEM Returner?

Emma started out supporting organisations managing and getting the most from Maternity Returners but has extended her offering to include all industry returners – focused on organisational/internal staff support.

Emma could run sessions on understanding unconscious bias, ED&I and integrating returners into roles. These sessions would be at an additional cost to the main program but organised and run by us at STEM Returners.

You may not feel it is needed, but it's there as an option. Emma's solution-based approach can be reviewed here: [Solutions | Emma Waltham](#)



## Example 12-week training plan

Week	STEM Returners	Company Induction	Technical / Soft skills Training	Job Placement	Mentor/ Buddy	Evaluation & Competency Review
-1	Confidence to Return Training  Overview of coaching platform  Introductions to each other			Provide job description	Assign every STEM Returner with an internal buddy/ mentor	
1	Ongoing support via online platform  Feedback/Q's at end of the week	Induction: Include introductory sessions with relevant networks  Site tour  Welcome from key stakeholders	Identify ahead of time any training that will help them deliver in their new role as quickly as possible.	Introduction to work placement  Introduction to colleagues/ Managers	Introduction to buddy/ mentor with expectations set of support provided	Individual meetings to capture expectations of programme.  Set business objectives  12-week programme set and agreed
2	Ongoing support via online platform			In role	Introduction to internal networks	Weekly review with Hiring manager.  Review progress against objectives set  Provide performance feedback

## 12-week training plan - continued

<b>Week</b>	<b>STEM Returners</b>	<b>Company Induction</b>	<b>Technical / Soft skills Training</b>	<b>Job Placement</b>	<b>Mentor/ Buddy</b>	<b>Evaluation &amp; Competency Review</b>
3	Ongoing support via online platform		Appropriate training for role	In role	Ad-hoc support from buddy/ internal mentor	Weekly review with hiring manager.  Review progress against objectives set  Provide performance feedback
4	STEM returners update with returners and hiring company	Returners informal monthly meet up with hiring managers/ HR		In role	Ad-hoc support from buddy/ internal mentor	4-week review  Review progress against objectives set  Provide performance feedback
5	Ongoing support via online platform			In role	Ad-hoc support from buddy/ internal mentor	Weekly review with hiring manager.  Review progress against objectives set  Provide performance feedback
6	Ongoing support via online platform		Suggested soft skills training communication/ problem solving	In role	Ad-hoc support from buddy/ internal mentor	Weekly review with hiring manager.  Review progress against objectives set  Provide performance feedback

## 12-week training plan - continued

<b>Week</b>	<b>STEM Returners</b>	<b>Company Induction</b>	<b>Technical / Soft skills Training</b>	<b>Job Placement</b>	<b>Mentor/ Buddy</b>	<b>Evaluation &amp; Competency Review</b>
6	Ongoing support via online platform		Suggested soft skills training communication/ problem solving	In role	Ad-hoc support from buddy/ internal mentor	Weekly review with hiring manager. Review progress against objectives set Provide performance feedback
7	STEM returners update with returners and hiring company			In role	Ad-hoc support from buddy/ internal mentor	Weekly review with hiring manager. Review progress against objectives set Provide performance feedback
8	Ongoing support via online platform	Returners informal monthly meet up with hiring managers/ HR		In role	Ad-hoc support from buddy/ internal mentor	8-week review Review progress against objectives set Provide performance feedback Start providing some guidance as to potential of ongoing permanent role and process for applying/ interviews
9	Ongoing support via online platform		Suggested soft skills training- internal networking/ conflict resolution	In role	Ad-hoc support from buddy/ internal mentor	Weekly review with hiring manager. Review progress against objectives set Provide performance feedback

## 12-week training plan - continued

Week	STEM Returners	Company Induction	Technical / Soft skills Training	Job Placement	Mentor/ Buddy	Evaluation & Competency Review
10	STEM Returners update with Returners and hiring company			In role	Ad-hoc support from buddy/ internal mentor	Weekly review with Hiring manager. Review progress against objectives set Provide performance feedback Confirm appraisal process for permanent job offer.
11	Ongoing support via online platform		Appropriate technical training to role	In role	Ad-hoc support from buddy/ internal mentor	Weekly review with Hiring manager. Review progress against objectives set Provide performance feedback
12	One to one support with Returner	Wrap up and thank you from key company stakeholders		In role	Ad-hoc support from buddy/ internal mentor	Final review with Hiring manager. Review performance against objectives set Conduct Interview for permanent job and confirm decision
13	End of Project Assessment					



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