

Q-Step Placement Host Profile



Usman Umar Senior GIS Officer in the City Development Directorate at Leeds City Council

Usman Umar took four Q-Step students on placement and is emphatic that it was a win-win situation.

What did the Q-Step students gain?

The Q-Step students processed, analysed and presented data to inform evidence-based city planning projects. Working on this substantial project in a professional context gave the students valuable experience in:

- Handling live data, including imperfect and incomplete data typical of real working scenarios.
- Solving problems, making decisions and being proactive in order to ensure the data they presented was meaningful and useful.
- Meeting deadlines, coping with pressure and using organisational skills including scheduling and time management.
- Developing teamwork and interpersonal skills by working across different departments.
- Using initiative to deliver on individual responsibilities and to get the job done.

What did Leeds City Council gain?

The Q-Step students met some important needs for Usman and his team by providing:

- Additional and flexible capacity to complete specific projects with pressing deadlines.
- High calibre data skills and expertise that is otherwise not always readily available.
- The evidence required for the Council to make informed planning decisions.
- Fresh insights and new ideas.
- Completion of extra tasks not in the original plan.

In short, the students completed everything that was required of them to a high standard and did a little more besides.

What skills did the Q-Step students bring?

Usman was sure, thanks to working with the staff at the Leeds University Q-Step Centre, that the placement students would all arrive with high-level data skills and a sound theoretical underpinning gained from their studies. The students were organised and committed, they were reliable and managed their time effectively. They also worked well together and within the wider team.

Were there any challenges?

Usman found that any challenges were logistical and administrative ones, such as arranging access to buildings and equipment, and supporting students to use the systems and processes in place at the organisation. However, he found these challenges straightforward to overcome, and outweighed by the benefits gained from hosting the placements.

Would Leeds City Council host more Q-Step students?

The Council will undoubtedly want to continue hosting Q-Step students. Usman is clear that there is a genuine desire to support students in this way and that, as and when suitable projects arise, Leeds City Council would be keen to use Q-Step students as a valuable external resource.

“The Q-Step students that worked on placement in my team did the programme and their institution proud”

Usman Umar, Senior GIS Officer in the City Development Directorate at Leeds City Council