

Guide to...

Finding Yourself a Placement

bathspa.ac.uk/careers

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Introduction

Gaining an internship or work placement can benefit students and recent graduates in a number of ways. This guide will outline the benefits, what to consider and provide advice and information on securing an internship or work placement.

What are the benefits of undertaking a placement?

“Without this internship I would have never have experienced such a fantastic opportunity! It has improved my last few months at university immensely! My work has improved so much since I came back from the internship and I hope to go back! Very insightful!”

(Thea Batty, Textile Design for Fashion and Interiors, 3rd year)

- Opportunity to integrate academic theory and practice
- Development of transferable skills and competencies
- Experience of the job application process including Assessment Centres and Video interviews
- Increased confidence, motivation and professionalism
- Development of a personal network of career contacts
- Valuable insights into industry culture and commercial awareness
- Heightened self-awareness through reflection
- A clearer understanding of what career you want to do, or not
- The opportunity to earn a salary or overseas travel
- Improved chances of securing a graduate-level job (source: ASET Online: <https://www.asetonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/2-ASET-Viewpoints-The-Benefits-of-Placement.pdf>)

Placement or internship?

We often get asked, what is the difference between a placement and an internship?
The answer? Nothing...

An internship is an Americanised term for a piece of work experience, however it tends to be more associated with graduate opportunities. Some sectors may commonly refer to work experience as an internship, for example in the creative industries. However, individual companies may also have their own preference for terminology, particularly if they advertise formal work experience schemes and programmes. Where opportunities are advertised, it is always worth checking the finer details or essential criteria to determine if you are eligible to apply. If you are still not sure then contact the company just to double check.

Things to consider

Before you begin your search for a placement you'll need to understand what you're looking for. Take time to consider different role(s) and industries as you'll need to be specific when creating applications, both advertised and speculative.

Remember that some types of roles will be available across a broad range of sectors, for example, marketing placements won't just be advertised by marketing-type companies. Sectors like Education, Public Sector, Environmental, Heritage for example, will also offer placements in these areas. Try to be open-minded about the job title, it is not always what it says on the tin!

If you are not sure what you would like to do, please refer to our '**Guide to Career Direction**', as well as explore Prospects to find out about the types of roles that align to your degree subject:

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/what-can-i-do-with-my-degree>.

Thinking of going international?

Pagoda Projects

Bath Spa University has partnered with Pagoda Projects to offer students a range of opportunities in China, Vietnam and Mexico. They offer short (8 weeks) and long term (6 months +) options in different sectors and roles - find out more here:

<https://internchina.com/bath-spa>

<https://internvietnam.com/Bath-Spa>

You'll get to be part of a big intern community and invited to monthly socials/events. You can also explore the '**Guide to Seeking Opportunities Abroad**' for further links to opportunities abroad.

Erasmus+ Traineeship Programme

If you're more interested in something closer to home the Erasmus+ Traineeship programme offers funding through the British Council to support those looking for placements in Europe. This must be a minimum of 8 weeks, but could be up to 12 months and is the only programme you can receive funding from post-graduation. However, this must be arranged before the end of your final year.

Funding is between €380 and €430 per month depending on the cost of living in that country. You'll also get access to online language support once you've completed your Traineeship agreement. For further information: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities/traineeships-students_en. You can source your own opportunity or explore advertised opportunities on ErasmusIntern:

<https://erasmusintern.org/>.

How to search / useful websites

Here are some useful websites to get you started:

- Rate My Placement - www.ratemyplacement.co.uk
- Target Jobs - www.targetjobs.co.uk
- The Guardian - <http://jobs.theguardian.com/st/jobs-placements.html>
- LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/>
- Indeed - www.indeed.co.uk
- Monster - <https://www.monster.co.uk>
- Total jobs - <https://www.totaljobs.com/>

Also take a look at our **'Career Sector Guides'**, available on our Bath Spa University Careers website, for links to relevant websites across a range of sectors by going to:

<https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/students/careers-and-employability/resources/>.

When using job websites or company websites to find advertised opportunities, be sure to bookmark those that are relevant and check back regularly.

Apply for advertised opportunities

Found the perfect role? Now it's time to apply!

As competition increases for placements at sought after companies, organisations are using a variety of methods to tell applicants apart. These include:



Most common are the use of CV's and application forms. For support with your CV, take a look at our **'Guide to CVs'** and for application forms our **'Guide to Application Forms'** (<https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/students/careers-and-employability/resources/>).

You'll need to create a new version of your CV for each role you apply for. You can generate a bank of CVs for different sectors and tweak them accordingly. Depending on your level of experience you may wish to consider a skills-based CV.

If you've applied for a role you may be invited to interview and/or assessment centre. Please do refer to our **'Guide to Preparing for Interviews'** and **'Guide to Assessment Centres'** (<https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/students/careers-and-employability/resources/>).

Can't find what you want? Apply speculatively!

You might find, depending on the sector or particular geographical area, that there isn't much advertised that interests you, therefore you'll need to approach this slightly differently.

Step 1. Begin by creating a list of organisations to contact

- a. Use Yell (<https://www.yell.com/>) to find companies in a chosen area, for example you could search 'marketing companies in Bath'.
- b. Look at local business pages, hubs, co-working spaces and group websites, such as Creative Bath (<https://www.creativebath.org/directory/>).
- c. Take a look at our '**Career Sector Guides**' (<https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/students/careers-and-employability/resources/>) for links to relevant websites across a range of sectors. These sector guides provide links to relevant websites to give you opportunities to research companies you have not yet heard of and consider speculative approaches.
- d. Attend career and recruitment events to start networking with organisations that interest you
- e. Speak to academic staff, friends and family, as they may know of organisations that you can contact
- f. Check trade press, for example isubscribe (<https://www.isubscribe.co.uk/Magazines/Industry-&-Trade/>) lists publications for a broad range of sectors

Step 2. Find a named contact

- a. Look on the company website or LinkedIn for the most appropriate person to address your cover letter to. By doing this it should mean it doesn't end up in the ether of emails companies receive everyday.
- b. Even better? – Connect with them via LinkedIn ahead of sending your CV and covering letter to check the best method of approaching them regarding a potential opportunity or to ask a question

Step 3. Tweak your CV

- a. Don't assume you can get away with a generic CV, ensure you have tweaked it to the industry and role you're applying for. Refer to our '**Guide to CVs**' (<https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/students/careers-and-employability/resources/>).

Step 4. Craft your cover letter

- a. You'll need to write a covering letter every time you apply for a placement, however you can use each one as a base and follow this simple structure:
 - Introduction: Begin by stating your reason for writing and be specific about the role you would like to do within that organisation.
 - Why them?: Do your research! Explain why you would like to work for that particular company or what makes them stand out. Is it a piece of work they've done recently or an award they've won?
 - Why you?: This is your opportunity to sell yourself. As you're applying for a role speculatively you'll need to highlight skills that are typically associated with that job type. If you're not sure either find a job description for a similar role or find typical duties for a range of roles on Prospects Job Profile pages (<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/>).
 - Closing: Reiterate your interest in the position and that you'll follow up your application with a phone call.

For more support with your covering letter, take a look at our '**Guide to Covering Letters & Emails**' (<https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/students/careers-and-employability/resources/>).

Step 5. Follow up with a phone call

- a. Use this as an opportunity to speak to the person that you addressed your covering letter too. Be ready to articulate your skills and experience and ask if they have any suitable opportunities. Don't panic if that person isn't available to speak to you at that time, arrange a future date/time when it's more convenient for them.

Step 6. Create a list

- a. Make a note of all conversations and follow up - you don't want to miss out on a potential opportunity.

Be prepared for knock-backs, perseverance is key so, don't give up! For further advice on applying speculatively, please refer to our '**Guide to Making Speculative Applications**' (<https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/students/careers-and-employability/resources/>).

Accommodation

If you are moving to a new geographical area, you may need to find accommodation for the time you are undertaking a placement or internship. Take time to research all accommodation options including reaching out to family and friends to see if they know of anyone who lives in the location you will be based.

Alternative ideas for accommodation (particularly when undertaking short-term placements) are:

- <https://www.airbnb.co.uk/> - AirBnB
- <https://www.couchsurfing.com/> - like AirBnB but free (gift economy).
- <https://dotdotdotproperty.com/> - Social enterprise offering free accommodation as 'property guardians' (i.e. housesitting!)
- <https://www.yha.org.uk/> - If you join the YHA they offer really cheap accommodation
- Try contacting local universities accommodation teams in the area you are relocating, as some provide halls of residence rooms for a short period of time
- Hostels can be a more cost effective alternative to hotels

How to be 'the best' intern they've ever had

The last thing you want to do is be 'ok' - this could be a fantastic opportunity for the future and you never know where it may lead. Here are some tips to stand out -

1. **Be enthusiastic** - This will make a good impression and may get you involved in more interesting projects later down the line.
2. **Be proactive** - Nothing to do? Don't get out your phone and start making Instagram stories. Instead, ask for something to do or take a look around the office and be proactive.
3. **Clarify uncertainties** - It's better to ask a stupid question than do a stupid thing. Employers don't expect you to be the finished article, so don't be afraid to ask if you're unsure.
4. **Show development** - Demonstrate that you can learn from constructive feedback. This shows a maturity and higher level of learning. Use this as an opportunity to impress.
5. **Get feedback** - Don't just ask for this at the end of the placement, although this is a good chance to ask for a reference, you can't do anything about it if you're not working the way they would hope you would. Schedule a 1-to-1/review with your line manager half way through your placement to discuss how you are getting on.

6. **Connect** - Add colleagues and people you meet on LinkedIn and grow your professional network - shine, and they might have an opportunity for you in the future.
7. **Seek support** - Remember, the Placements Team can still give you advice, even if you didn't source your placement through one of our advertised schemes. Give us a call 01225 875525 or email placements@bathspa.ac.uk for help.

Reflect on your experience

During and after your placement, it is really important to reflect on the experiences you gained. This can help you consider what you have learned, how you might articulate your experiences to future employers, and how your experiences may impact on your career going forward. It can also help you re-assess your career aspirations, particularly if your experience of working in a particular sector was not how you expected it to be. Some questions you might want to ask include:

- What did you enjoy or not enjoy about your placement experience?
- What technical skills did you develop from your experience?
- What transferable skills did you develop from your experience?
- What achievements did you have during your placement?
- Describe *what* you did (duties/responsibilities), *why* you did them (reason) and *how* you did them (process)...
- What did you learn from completing these tasks? ...about yourself and the business/company/industry?
- What would you do differently if you worked there again?
- What was your experience of working in a team?
- What did you observe from other team members roles and responsibilities?
- What is the management structure of the company? How effective is this structure?
- Can you describe any good leadership skills you witnessed?
- What would you do differently if you were in charge?
- What is their recruitment and retention like?
- Have there been recent changes in the industry the company operates in?
- Does your experience impact on your career ideas? If so, in what way?

What do we offer? Bath Spa University Placement Schemes

We offer a variety of ways to help students and recent graduates gain that all important work experience. Take a look below to find out more information:

Summer Placement Scheme

Open to all undergraduates (1st, 2nd and 3rd year) and taking place during the summer break, we offer a variety of 4 and 12 week placements across different roles and industries. The scheme launches in January with roles being added weekly until the end of July. Remember to check your Bath Spa emails to sign up to our mailing list and Facebook page.

Previous employers have included, Avon and Somerset Police, Seasons Ecology, Proctor and Stevenson, Marshfield Bakery, B&NES and Ink Copywriters.

Santander SME Internship Programme

Open to graduates and graduating students this programme runs from November to July until the funding is exhausted. Check your Bath Spa emails and go to bathspa.ac.uk/careers for more information.

Previous employers have included, Red Bucket Pictures, Dialect Inc, Media Clash, Orca, Rhapsody, Anything Creative and Living Better Health.

NEW* Micro Placements

Mini projects and experiences for you to get your foot on the ladder. Open to first year undergraduates only, these will take place across University holidays. Check your Bath Spa emails for launch details.

Studio Residencies

These are 9-12 month, funded studio spaces for those looking to forge their own business or hone their craft. Partnerships with the Bristol Textile Quarter, Spike Island and 44AD. Find out more through lecturers or by emailing placements@bathspa.ac.uk.

Placements Award

We're well aware that some industries don't always offer paid placements, therefore, we've set up the **Placements Award** to help ensure you can still take advantage of these opportunities. You can apply for up to £250 to help with associated costs for undertaking a placement or employability related activity. Terms apply, check the Bath Spa University Scholarships and Funding page (<https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/students/student-finance/scholarships-and-funding/placements-award/>) for up to date information and closing dates.

Further Support

If you would like further support from the Placements Team go to bathspa.ac.uk/careers to see the ways in which you can access our service, including workshops and events, appointments and to access our extensive range of resources.

You can contact the Placements Team at placements@bathspa.ac.uk or contact our main Careers Reception 01225 875525 or at careers@bathspa.ac.uk.

Please note that Bath Spa Careers does not endorse particular organisations.

(This guide was last updated in Summer 2019).

GET A HEAD START

We're here to help you get a great start to your career. We're open all year round, so come and visit us in the Careers Space, book an appointment, or get in touch.

Careers Space, SL.G04
Steward's Lodge

careers@bathspa.ac.uk
01225 875525

www.bathspa.ac.uk/careers

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Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this leaflet is accurate but we recommend that you check all details carefully.

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