



Sheffield Hallam
Students' Union

PLACEMENT HANDBOOK

CONTENTS

PLACEMENT HANDBOOK	
INTRODUCTION	3
BEFORE YOUR PLACEMENT	5
DURING YOUR PLACEMENT	7
WHAT IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG?	10
HALLAM UNION	12
AFTER YOUR PLACEMENT	14
CONTACTS	15



So you're about to begin your placement year. Maybe you're staying in Sheffield, or you could be moving to somewhere completely new. Either way, you're about to embark upon a new phase in your education and you might feel like a Fresher all over again, having to make new friends, find your way around a new city and rise to new challenges. This year will give you the opportunity to put into

practice the skills that you have developed on your course and to experience the kind of environment you might work in when you complete your studies.

A successful placement comes from a strong partnership between you and your employer. You will need to work together to ensure that you get the most out of your placement year.

Although you won't be on campus during your placement year you are still a member of the University and of the Students' Union. Your Placement Tutor will be your first point of contact should you want to discuss anything. Hallam Union will also be there to give you advice or support if you need it.

This guide will take you through the important things to remember before, during and after your placement as well as telling you how Hallam Union can support you throughout the whole experience.

I hope you get all that you want from the year ahead, good luck!

**Academic Affairs Executive,
Hallam Union**

INTRODUCTION

hallam volunteering

providing opportunities to meet people and develop skills through community volunteering



*“My placement year has been hugely beneficial both personally and professionally. I have broadened my knowledge by putting theory into practice and gaining constant insights into the world of work. I have grown in confidence throughout this year, and my new skill set has enhanced my CV significantly, all of which would not be possible without my internship.” **Kate***

Your placement year might not start for a few months but there are a few things you need to do in advance.

1. Make sure you have a placement.

This might sound obvious, but the University isn't obliged to find a placement for you. For many courses, a placement year is compulsory so if you're having difficulty finding somewhere then contact your Placement Tutor as soon as you can.

2. Talk to your Placement Tutor.

Your Placement Tutor is there for you to contact throughout your placement. They can also help you to prepare before your placement. You should talk to your tutor about;

- your expectations of your placement. Your Placement Tutor will be able to tell you what to expect from the year and help you to set your own objectives.
- how and when your work will be monitored and assessed.
- how your placement will contribute to the final award for your course.
- how the practical work you do on your placement relates to the academic aspect of the course.

3. Find out about your new home.

If you're moving to a new town or city, take some time to find out a little about it. You will be spending a year there so find out about the local area, transport and accommodation. Find out if anyone from your course is relocating to the same place - you might want to share accommodation with them or meet up when you arrive.

“My placement year has been a fantastic opportunity with a great company. I have been involved in many diverse projects and tasks, with a high level of responsibility. Everyday has been different and there are so many positives to take out of the year. This year has taught me many skills that I will take into my final year at University.” **Alex**



First Things First

Someone at work should be appointed to be your supervisor or liaison. Take some time to get to know them as they will play a key role in your placement year. They will be able to give you useful information about:

- expectations at work and lines of accountability
- the length of your placement
- holiday entitlement
- sickness procedures
- methods of payment
- flexi-time (if appropriate)
- any relevant health and safety issues
- trade union membership

Your supervisor is also the person you can talk to about your goals for the year and what you want to get out of your placement. Remember... your placement year is there to help you learn and develop so don't settle for a year of photocopying and filing.

Health and Safety at Work

All employers have a legal duty to ensure the health and safety of all people in the workplace. The placement provider must provide you with information about the risks you will encounter, and the arrangements for controlling them. The University will also be developing risk assessments, and you should be told by your supervisor about any significant risks and how to control them. You should expect to be told about these arrangements before you encounter any risks. If you have any concerns about your safety in the workplace, you should first talk to your academic supervisor. The Placement Provider should also be made aware of any concerns. As always, if you feel that your concerns are not being addressed, contact your placement tutor or Hallam Union. The University Health and Safety Service is also available to provide support and advice.

Money Matters

As you will receive payment during your placement year and won't be studying at University, you have to manage your money differently to how you would during your studies.

Income Tax

Income tax is paid on certain types of income received during the financial year (April to April). Everyone has a personal tax allowance, a standard amount set each year in the budget, on which they do not pay tax. In 2009/2010 the basic allowance will be £6475.

As student loans, grants and parental contributions are tax free, it is rare that students would exceed their personal tax allowance during a tax year. This has led to the myth that students do not pay tax which is, unfortunately, not true. If you earn above your tax allowance you will pay the same tax as anyone else would.

Tax is calculated on a yearly basis but most employers deduct it from your wages/salary through the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) scheme. Your tax allowance is pro-rata so that tax is paid each month rather than having to pay it all at the end of the year. Tax Enquiry Centres can answer your questions about your own tax deductions. You can contact them through the Inland Revenue at www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk

At the end of the tax year (April) you will receive a P60 from your employer indicating how much tax in total has been deducted. Depending on the tax actually paid, your earnings over the previous tax year and your tax allowances, you might be able to claim a rebate of any overpaid tax.

At the end of your placement you should receive a P45 from your employers detailing any unpaid tax in that financial year. You could then claim a rebate if tax has been overpaid and if you are not likely to earn anything else before the end of that financial year.

To apply for a tax rebate you should contact your tax office. This will be stated on your P45 or P60.

National Insurance

You are also likely to have National Insurance (NI) contributions deducted from your wages/salary. These will be credited to your contribution record and affect your entitlement to certain benefits and retirement pension in the future.

You only pay NI rates if you earn more than £110 per week.

You may pay less NI rates if you contribute to an occupational scheme established by your employers.

Council Tax

Full-time students are generally exempt from paying Council Tax. While you are on placement, you will still be classed as a full-time student for Council Tax purposes. You can still obtain a 'Student Status' certificate from your Students Records section of ShuSpace.

If you fall into one of the few categories of students who may be liable for Council Tax (e.g. you own your own house and have a non-student lodger) then you may qualify for Council Tax benefit. However, most students cannot claim this so seek advice.

Tuition Fees

While on placement you are still a part of the University and will be liable to pay tuition fees. This is a maximum of £640 for home students.

If you receive financial support from your Local Education Authority (LEA) and the Student Loans Company (SLC) you will have to apply for this each year - including your placement year. If you fail to apply to your LEA and the SLC does not pay your fees, then the University will invoice you for them directly.

Student Loans

You are only entitled to a reduced Student Loan of about 50% of the full time rate (plus tuition fee support) while on paid placement, if you meet the usual conditions.

There are certain specified unpaid placements that attract full LEA support - please seek advice if you think this applies to you.

Childcare

You are not entitled to childcare assistance through your LEA if you are on a paid placement. You may be able to get assistance through Working Tax Credits (contact Inland Revenue).

Access to Learning Funds and Other Financial Assistance

You are still entitled to apply to the Access to Learning Funds for assistance while on placement. This might be appropriate if your placement falls through or if your wages are low, though you will still have to meet the usual conditions of entitlement. Contact the Student Financial Support Office to apply.

Benefits and Tax Credits

As a rule, most students cannot claim benefits or tax credits. However, if you are a parent, are disabled or have caring responsibilities you may be entitled to this. For more information about this, please contact Hallam Union Advice Centre or go to www.taxcredits.inlandrevenue.gov.uk

WHAT IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG?

For the vast majority of students, their placement year is enjoyable and worthwhile with few difficulties. However, if something does go wrong you should contact your placement tutor who will be able to advise you on how to proceed.

If you encounter any problems you feel are hindering your work be aware of the channels to use in notifying the University. As a placement student you can submit extenuating circumstances on an EC1 form to the award assessment board explaining any situations beyond your control which may have adversely affected your performance. If you do this, your situation will be discussed by an Extenuating Circumstances Panel. Information on this process is available from Hallam Union Advice Centre or from your Placement Tutor. You can get the EC1 form online from the Student Portal.

If you are involved in an accident on placement you must report this to your academic supervisor.

Discrimination and Harassment

Employment law provides protection from workers against discrimination at work on the grounds of sex, gender, sexual orientation, beliefs or religion, race, age, disability or the membership/non-membership of a trade union. The legislation is aimed at achieving equality in the workplace by eliminating less favourable treatment on these grounds.

Hallam Union regards harassment as wholly unacceptable and believes in firmly tackling any incidents of harassment to ensure that the placement is a safe and comfortable environment. No one should feel deterred from complaining about behaviour which causes them distress.

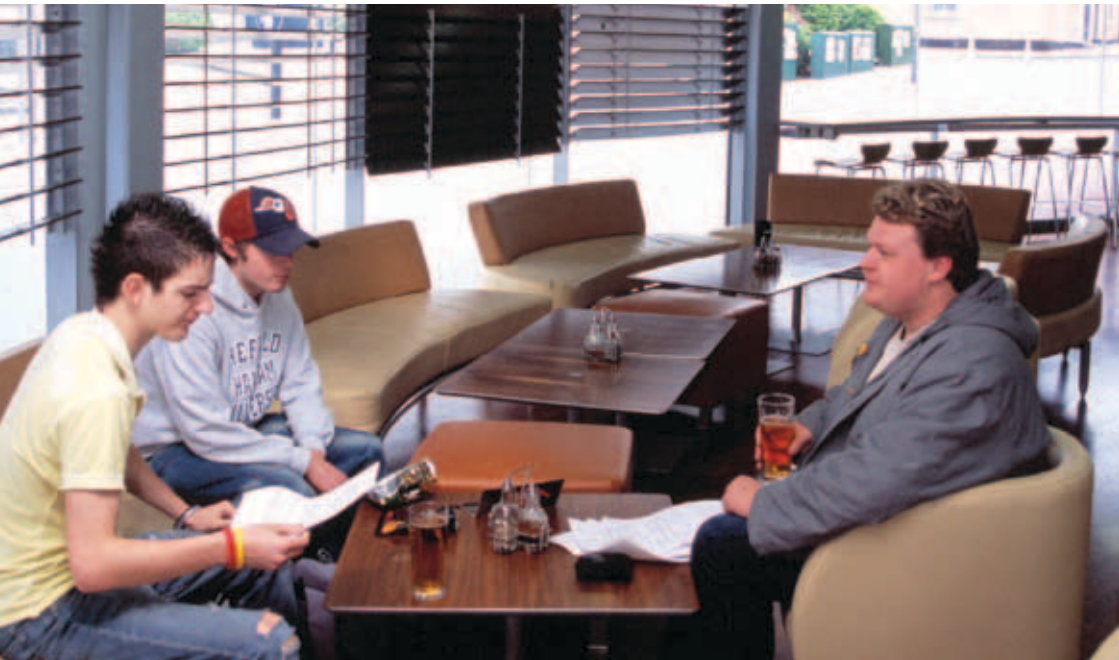
To report harassment, approach either Hallam Union or a University staff member who you feel comfortable talking to. All discussion will be completely confidential and no further action will be taken without your express permission.

Hallam Union can provide advice and guidance including how to deal informally with the situation - this may help to minimise distress to the victim and is sometimes enough to stop the offensive behaviour. If you wish the matter to be pursued within the formal grievance procedure we can assist you. You can withdraw from the grievance procedure at any time and no further action will be taken.

Student Complaints Procedure

Sheffield Hallam University has a Student Complaints Procedure which provides a structured route for redress should you have a complaint during your placement that regards either the University or another student. Refer to the student portal or contact Hallam Union Advice Centre where we will be happy to discuss the Student Complaints Procedure with you.

Whilst you cannot use this procedure to complain about your employer, you should make your Placement Tutor aware of any problems you have encountered. This will, at least, ensure that the University is in a position to sever any links with an employer who exploits or mistreats students.



*“Your placement year is a fantastic opportunity to earn some money which can help you to manage your finances much better when back in your final year.” **Andrew***

You are still classed as a full time student whilst on placement and are therefore still eligible to use all the facilities of Hallam Union including representation, advice and activities.

Advice Centre

Hallam Union Advice Centre can provide independent and confidential advice on many matters including funding, debt, housing, benefits, academic, employment, immigration and legal issues.

Student Representation

Placement students are fully enrolled members of the University and are therefore entitled to representation at course committees and Boards of Study. Because it is not always practical to elect placement student reps there are no formal elections. However, if you want to participate in Course Committees or want to raise an issue of relevance to placement students as a whole, then contact your Programme Manager to put an item on the agenda. Alternatively, you can contact the Academic Affairs Officer at Hallam Union.

Your SHU Card and Other Students' Unions

You are entitled to a SHU Card during your placement year. Your SHU Card is also your NUS Card. It has the Hallam Union logo on the front and shows that you are a member of the Nation Union of Students on the reverse.

With your SHU Card you are entitled to use the facilities of other Students' Unions who are affiliated to NUS (nationally, this is virtually all in the country). Your SHU Card will give you access to all sorts of entertainments and student activities, student discounts and rail/ coach passes.

Elections

When you come back from your placement, Hallam Union will still be here and there will be a new elected executive committee. Whilst you are on placement you are entitled to vote or to stand for a position in the elections. For information on how to do this, check the Hallam Union website or write to the Union to request more information. Mark your letter 'for the attention of the Returning Officer'.

“I can’t wait to go on placement next year. I’m nervous about moving away from Sheffield but looking forward to meeting new people and getting an opportunity to put into practice all that I’ve been taught on my course.” **Ash**



“My placement year was awesome. I came back to final year really grounded and more determined than ever to knuckle down. I’ve found my placement year invaluable when seeking graduate work, and employers are really impressed by the experience and responsibility involved. It flies by, you earn money and you still have a year to go until you’re in the scary non student world!” **Ruth**

AFTER YOUR PLACEMENT

Debriefing

Ensure that some form of debriefing takes place. This may be with your Placement Tutor or with a group of other placement students. It is always a valuable exercise to review your time on placement and to reiterate its relevance to your academic work, both in the previous and forthcoming year. Also, a more informal chat with your friends who have finished their placement could be valuable too. If possible, check with your Placement Tutor how any debriefing will be conducted.

Tuition fees for your final year

Remember to submit an application for student support to your Local Education Authority in good time for the next academic year.

Your final year

When you return to University for your final year, take the time to look at the year ahead.

- what work will you have to complete during the year?
- have any assessment regulations changed?
- when should you start applying for jobs?
- how can the University and Hallam Union support you in your final year?

CONTACTS

Hallam Union

www.hallamunion.org

Reception

0114 225 4111

Academic Affairs Officer

0114 225 4532

Advice Centre

0114 225 4129

Equal Opportunities Officer

0114 225 4129

Sheffield Hallam University

www.shu.ac.uk

University Switchboard

0114 225 5555

Student Services

0114 255 3813

Accommodation Service

0114 225 4503

Counselling

0114 225 2136

Multifaith chaplaincy

0114 225 3183

Student Financial Support Office

0114 225 3964

Careers

0114 225 3813

Medical Centres

0114 225 2138

0114 263 6100

Health and Safety Service

0114 225 4515

SHU Card Office

0114 225 5007

*“It’s quite a shock coming back to Uni; but make the most of it... the nine months of final year fly by too quickly.” **Andrew***



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