

SPS Work and Work Placements

A placement provides a great opportunity for you to see how your academic studies can be brought to life in a real-world setting. This unit aims to bridge the gap between academic learning and the 'real world' of work, helping you develop a critical understanding of key concepts, reflect upon your own learning and employability, and gain a range of relevant skills and experience.

The work placement should be mutually beneficial for both you, as a student, and your placement provider; an organisation will benefit from you undertaking a project or relevant set of tasks, whilst you will have the opportunity to engage with jobs, processes, and issues not always provided by your university studies.

Although we would hope the majority of placements will be completed face to face, the way some organisations work is changing, so it is likely that some placements will take a blended approach and that you may complete at least some, if not all of your placement remotely. There is a likelihood that the balance of remote and in-person working in many workplaces will vary in the future as a result of the pandemic, so it is helpful for you to experience both – this placement will still give you an opportunity to network, develop skills and understand what it's like to work in a sector that interests you no matter how your placement is carried out.

It is also possible that we may not be able to provide the same number or type of placements that we have previously. It is therefore really important when completing the sign-up form to take time to consider not just what type of role / sector that you want to work in, but also the skills that you want to develop. This will give us the best chance to try and find a placement that will suit your needs. Think about a placement that relates to things you have found interesting on your degree programme or that supports future career plans.

If further restrictions are re-introduced later in the year, we will contact you to agree next steps and discuss whether the placement unit is appropriate for you.

How the placement works

- You will be asked to complete a form, indicating what type of organisation/sector you would like for your placement, and what skills you wish to gain from this. Your response should be as detailed as possible and reflect your key areas of interest.
- Based on your response, we will match you with a suitable organisation and will then share the details of the placement and organisation with you. It is likely we will contact you during the summer to discuss this further.
- If you don't think the placement opportunity is suitable or of interest to you this is fine, but you may not be offered another placement sourced by the University. It's fine for you to organise your own placement, but you must ensure you have the agreement of the Professional Liaison Network (PLN) **before** contacting any organisations.
- Once the placement is agreed, a Placement Agreement Form is signed by the placement provider, Unit Director and by you.
- Once all parties have signed the Placement Agreement Form, the PLN will ask you to liaise directly with the placement provider to organise your start date (normally early – mid November) and working pattern.
- You will complete a minimum of 80 hours (10 days) at your placement between November and May.
- You will be required to upload a signed form confirming the number of hours you have completed to Blackboard as part of your assessment – you cannot complete the unit without this.

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- We keep in contact with you and the placement provider to check that everything is going according to plan, but any issues or concerns can be raised with us or the Unit Director at any stage of the placement.

What is expected of you?

- When completing the unit form, please answer the questions with **as much detail as possible**. The more information you give the more likely it is that we will be able to find you a suitable placement. Please be as specific as you can about the types of organisations, sectors, and roles you would like, as well as the skills you wish to develop. We do work hard to match students with placements we believe to be a good fit and ask you to be open to considering opportunities, even if they are not exactly what you have asked for.
- Once the placement is agreed, you will be asked to contact your placement provider to introduce yourself formally and agree a start date and working pattern with them.
- As a representative of the University, you must behave in a professional and courteous manner whilst on placement and when communicating with your placement provider.
- As with any job, please inform your placement provider of any absence, with as much notice as possible.
- You should also alert your placement provider and the University of any problems or other issues that might affect your ability to complete the placement.

FAQs

I have a part-time job, or other commitments, can I still take this unit?

In the past students have been able to successfully complete the unit whilst also having other commitments, such as a part-time job, volunteering, or sporting activities. **However, please think carefully about whether you are able to offer a placement the dedication it requires for you to get the most out of the opportunity.** You need to have a flexible and proactive approach to make the most of the experience. The time commitment is 80 hours at your placement, and this will need to be negotiated to suit you and your placement provider.

What will be required of me before and during my placement?

Once you have completed the unit form, it is likely we will be contacting you over the summer break. Therefore, it is important that you regularly check your university email and respond promptly to any communications. If you are going to be away for a period of time without access to your emails, please just let the PLN know ahead of time so we can plan accordingly (email fssl-pln@bristol.ac.uk).

Your placement may be your first experience of a working environment; always remember that you are a representative of the University of Bristol and, as such, must behave in a professional and courteous manner. In practice this means:

- communicating professionally and responding promptly to emails from the University as well as your placement provider;
- when introducing yourself to your placement provider, making sure you discuss their expectations and asking any questions you might have about your placement with them. This is **your** placement, therefore you need to take ownership of the role and your work;
- while on placement, informing your placement provider and the University of any problems or other issues that might affect your ability to complete the placement or attend when expected (e.g., illness);
- informing your placement provider of any absence, with as much notice as possible. This means discussing their expectations of timekeeping and absence reporting with them;
- discussing with your placement provider what their dress code policy is.

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What happens if the placement I am offered is not what I expected?

We take into consideration your preferences and try to source placements based on student requests; however, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to find placements exactly matching all students' wishes. We encourage you to think about the transferable skills and experience that a placement could offer and opportunities this could lead to in the future. For example, consider the groups of people the organisation might come into contact with, other organisations they work with, the networking opportunities and the skills development that the placement offers. Please take a broader view of what placement opportunities can offer, even if it is not exactly in your ideal role, sector, or organisation. Many of the staff in the organisations are keen to hear from students who would like to work on other projects/extend their placements/undertake a secondment once they're there, and we would encourage you to do this with any opportunity you get.

Can I find my own placement?

If you don't wish to undertake the work placement we have matched you with, this is fine, but you may not be offered another placement sourced by the University. Please bear in mind that this placement unit has been running for several years, and we have spent a lot of time reaching out to organisations in the Bristol area. It is therefore likely that we will have already spoken to any organisation you may want to contact when finding your own placement. You can choose to organise your own placement – but you **must** ensure you have the agreement of the PLN **before** contacting any organisations. **Please also note that should you fail to find a suitable placement by the start of TB2, you will not be able to continue to take the Work and Work Placements unit and you will be moved to a different TB2 20 credit unit.**

Where will my placement be based?

The majority of placements will be based in and around the Bristol area, easily accessible within an hour and a half by public transport. Although we would hope the majority of placements will be completed face to face, there is a possibility you may need to complete at least some, if not all of your placement remotely. There may be suitable placements slightly further afield where it may be useful to have access to a car. However, we will discuss this with you if the situation arises. **Please note, when matching placements, we do not take into consideration where you live.**

What will my working hours be?

Working hours will vary, depending on the organisation you are working for and the type of role you undertake. Some placements will require a set number of hours, on the same day, every week. However, other placements might require more irregular patterns of working. **This is something you will need to discuss and agree with your placement provider before you start your placement.**

What should I wear for my placement?

Different organisations will have varying expectations in terms of dress code. Please discuss this with your placement provider once you have introduced yourself, along with any other questions you might have about your placement. It is still important to discuss dress code expectations even if you will be completing your placement remotely.

Will I need to organise a DBS check and/or security clearance?

If a placement provider requires you to have a DBS check and / or security clearance, we will inform you of this as soon as possible. The University will organise and pay for this if it is required, but you will need to complete the form(s) and provide any evidence and documents. It's imperative that you do this as soon as possible, so as not to delay the start of your placement. If you have lived outside of the UK in the last year,



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please let us know in your answer to Question 17 of the Unit Form. This should not affect your ability to undertake a placement, but we may need to contact you to provide additional paperwork.

Can I claim travel expenses?

Yes, the University will cover reasonable travel expenses and incidentals up to £50. You must save your receipts and you will be able to claim once in February and once in May.

If you have any further questions, please contact the Professional Liaison Network, fssl-pln@bristol.ac.uk.