Work Experience and Volunteering
The Careers and Employability Service will support you throughout your course and after graduation

**EmployableMe:** Our innovative and fresh approach to careers and employability at the University of Huddersfield is about taking control of your own career planning – with support from your professionally qualified and experienced award winning careers team. Look out for the green EmployableME character around campus and particularly within the careers centre in Student Central.

**MyCareer:** MyCareer is the hub of everything you do within careers. From here you can access everything! Including:
- JobShop
- The Huddersfield Graduate Programme
- Careers events on campus
- Resources

You can access MyCareer through the Student Hub via the Jobs and Careers tab.

**Career Resources:** The Careers and Employability Service provides you with access to personalised career resources. You can create a CV, listen to experts discussing job interviews, explore career options and test your skills through online assessments before facing the real thing.

You will be able to find:
- CV Builder
- Interview training
- Preparation for assessment centres
- Practice psychometric tests
- Short videos to help you with applications

You can access these resources from your MyCareer platform.

**Grad Jobs Bureau:** The Careers and Employability Service is here to help you with your future; whether that be moving into a graduate job, exploring postgraduate study options or training for a particular career. We continue to support you after you have finished your course to aid your transition from final year student, to graduate of the University of Huddersfield.
Introduction:

Employers want candidates with more than a degree – they look for applicants who have also developed a range of skills alongside their studies.

One of the ways to do this is by gaining work experience whilst at University. Your ability to offer a strong academic qualification alongside credible experience is what will make you an employable graduate when you leave the University of Huddersfield.

Work experience and volunteering are opportunities to:

- Give yourself a competitive edge and ensure that your CV stands out from the competition.
- Develop key employability skills.
- Help you to decide on a future career direction.
- Demonstrate that you have already achieved a certain level of competence - employers want new recruits to be self reliant and prepared to work from day one.
- Obtain the required experience to pursue a chosen career.
- Put theory and learning from your course into practice.
- Gain an insight into different careers/organisations and find out more about what you enjoy in a working environment.
- Network with employers - students are increasingly being offered jobs in the companies where they gained work experience.
- Identify jobs that aren’t always advertised – for example you might be in a position where you can become aware of internal advertisements.
- Get motivated - many students who undertake work experience or a placement often feel more enthusiastic about their career after working in a structured environment, experiencing a new job and working with a variety of people.

It’s worth exploring the different ways that you can approach work experience and volunteering. Don’t think that these ideas need to be undertaken individually – it’s quite common for a final year student to have experience from a placement, a part time job, work shadowing, the Students Union and voluntary work with a charity by the end of their course.
Things to consider

When to gain experience: Your course might have a scheduled time when your work experience or placement needs to take place and so you will need to check this with your tutor before applying. However we generally advise that you start gaining experience in your very first year at University. By using your time wisely you can find opportunities to develop skills and gain the experience employers look for in candidates. It’s never too soon to start researching your ideas and planning.

If you have a career in mind: Do your research and find out the skills, capabilities and experience that employers in your chosen career look for in a graduate; looking at our current job vacancies will help.

If you do not have a career in mind: It is still essential to develop transferable skills and gain experience to ensure that you stand out from the competition when applying for future opportunities. Also, undertaking work experience may help you to refine your career ideas.

Applying for opportunities: Your approach to applications for work experience and volunteering opportunities should be no different to the way that you apply for any other job and you need to take it seriously. Employers will not give poor quality CVs and applications a second chance and you also need to stand out from the competition.

Do your research: Look into the different opportunities available, research the individual organisations that you are applying to and tailor your application to each position.

Use JobShop: you can access this from the Careers and Employability Service website and you can also see a selection of its opportunities on the Student JobShop Board within Student Central.

Use the Students Union: The Students Union: this is the main place on campus for volunteering vacancies – and don’t forget that student societies can also be a useful source of opportunities.

Find your placement unit: ask your course tutors for more details about this.

You will need to be proactive: This often requires a speculative approach by sending your CV and covering letter to employers of interest, even though they may not have jobs advertised, and enquiring about any opportunities they may have. You need to try and convince them that you would be of benefit to their organisation so it is essential to market yourself effectively.

Types of opportunities

Part time jobs

Even before starting your course at the University of Huddersfield you may have had paid employment and most students seek part time jobs during term time. It’s also a fact that relatively routine jobs like retail or bar work enable you to add to your work based skills, for example experience of working with other people, developing communication skills and gaining an insight into operating effectively in a business environment.

With part time work in term time:

- Think carefully about how many hours you can reasonably work without it affecting your studies. The maximum number of hours recommended for full-time students by JobShop is no more than 15 hours per week during term.
- If you are an international student wishing to work whilst studying you must ensure that your visa allows you to do this. You will also need to apply for a National Insurance number just like any UK resident. You can check for the latest information with the International Office.

Voluntary work or unpaid work

This is unpaid time spent working for an organisation like a charity or even a Students Union Society.

This qualifies as gaining experience because you are effectively undertaking a role, using current skills and developing new ones.

Volunteering opportunities can range from helping and supporting people to more of a business, marketing or media role. Charities can benefit greatly from student/graduate knowledge or experience to help them achieve their goals.

There are hundreds of organisations, both local and national, who seek student volunteers. For example, the Students Union has a range of opportunities on its website and Kirklees Volunteer Bureau is situated close to Queensgate.

If you are seeking unpaid work experience then this may require a speculative approach i.e. sending your CV and covering letter to charities and people of interest even though they may not have roles advertised. For this to be effective, you will need a careful and well researched approach.
Taking a placement year during your course

You could opt for a placement as an opportunity to earn money and/or gain relevant experience. Most courses at the University of Huddersfield have the option for you to build in a placement year as an accredited part of your degree so if you are interested in this then firstly talk to your tutor. A placement year is a chance for you to develop your career ideas, gain substantial and practical work based experience and to enhance your chances of academic success; a higher percentage of students who have undertaken a placement year gain first class degrees.

Work shadowing

There are careers where work experience is tougher to come by, for example in media, creative industries and theatre. One alternative is to arrange a short period of time spent shadowing someone in a relevant job. Work shadowing involves observing someone during their working day. This is not usually a hands-on experience but an opportunity to develop your communication and networking skills, and also commercial awareness. It’s a valuable chance to see things for yourself and also to talk to people employed in your chosen career about how they became successful and whether the job is what they expected it to be. If you approach it in the right way and make the most of your opportunity it could be that the person you work shadow could become a long term career mentor or even a future employer.

Graduate Internships

Internships are an opportunity to work in an organisation for a fixed period of time and are often project based. They can give you real life work experience, let you try your hand at a possible career, and prove yourself to a potential employer. If you make a good impression then it could potentially lead to more work. Internships should be paid, as although you’ll be an intern the work you do will generally be a valued part of the business and you will be required to work as hard as any other employee.

Work experience and teacher training

If you are considering a career in teaching then your personal statement will need relevant experience within education. Ideally this will need to be in a school setting; if you find this difficult to arrange then try to at least work shadow in several institutions. Not only will this give you a valuable insight into teaching as a career it will help you to realise what you like about it – and that, alongside a more literal account of your experience, will form part of your teaching application’s personal statement.

Making the most of the experience

Whether your work experience has lasted for a week or a year it is always worth reflecting on how to make the most of it.

Be indispensable

• Try to make a positive impact – look to achieve an early success.
• Think about your course – has it allowed you to develop an expertise that the organisation needs?
• Identify the organisation’s priorities, such as changing customer needs, new products or services, emerging markets and competitors.
• Take a broader look at the needs of the whole of the organisation; you can become indispensable by performing a crucial role, developing invaluable expertise, or attaching yourself to growth areas.
• Offer to do mundane tasks such as answering the phone or photocopying – many job descriptions ask applicants to provide evidence that they have ‘office’ skills.
• Think about ways that you can ‘free-up’ your manager’s time by volunteering to take on aspects of their work.

Get the most out of the experience

• Set yourself clear targets about what you want to gain.
• Ensure that you clearly understand what is expected of you and how your performance will be measured; if you are unsure just ask.
• Don’t be afraid to ask questions.
• Think ahead to where you would like to be in the future and identify how your work experience can act as a ‘stepping-stone’.
• Do your research to uncover the skills and experience sought by employers.
• Set yourself regular personal development targets broken down into small manageable steps.

Develop the art of networking

• Work experience allows you to develop contacts for the future; everyone you meet can potentially become part of your network – are you on LinkedIn yet?
• Look for role models who you can learn from.
• Use every opportunity to build new relationships with clients, suppliers, distributors, competitors, colleagues and organisations in related fields.
• Keep your eyes and ears open for courses, training sessions, meetings and external events – they are all useful ways to expand your network.
• Build your contacts and don’t be afraid to use them.
Making the most of the experience continued

**Use your initiative**
- Don’t just wait to be given tasks; offer your suggestions and ideas to show that you are also willing and confident to work independently.
- Seize every opportunity – and volunteer for roles and responsibility beyond your remit.
- Always try to show that you are interested in what you are doing.
- If you are seen to be enthusiastic during routine activities, you are more likely to be asked to be involved in more complex or interesting projects.

**Always act professionally**
Job descriptions nearly always focus on a professional attitude and work experience is your chance to evidence that you’re capable of it; skills include:
- Good time keeping
- Working your full allocated hours
- Appearance
- Attitude
This means keeping your personal business (checking your mobile, personal email, using the internet) to a minimum during company time.

**Keep your manager informed**
Your line manager will need to know how you are progressing. Request meetings with them on a consistent and regular basis and try to establish a rapport and a professional relationship.

**Keep a reflective record of your experience and skills**
One of the most useful things that you need to remember to do whilst undertaking any work experience is to keep a log of the following:
- Details of tasks/projects completed
- Knowledge and skills gained
- Events and training attended
- Projects/tasks that you shadowed even if you did not play an active role
- Feedback from work colleagues
Simple notes about your experience will pay dividends in the future when you are asked to give evidence of your skills and experience. This is also a great way to become more self aware of your skills and abilities and it will help you to focus job applications as you often need evidence when claiming to possess skills.
This publication is also available online - should you like to have it in an alternative format please contact us.

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