STUDENT PLACEMENT HANDBOOK
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WORK PLACEMENTS

EMPLOYABILITY AND CAREERS
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1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 WELCOME

We know it’s a tough job market out there and with more and more competition for jobs, you need to be able to stand out from the crowd. That’s why at Essex we prepare you for the future by providing an excellent academic education and plenty of opportunities to learn new skills. However, we know it’s not just about qualifications. Practical experience is just as important when competing for jobs. By undertaking a work placement you will be able to apply your learning in a real workplace and gain transferable skills and expertise needed to secure that ideal job when you graduate.

This Student Placement Handbook provides you with information about work placements. While you are on your placement, you are still a student of the University of Essex and we will support your academic development and general welfare. This handbook is designed to answer the questions you will have about your placement and you are encouraged to get in touch with your Faculty Placements Team.

1.2 PLACEMENT INTRODUCTION

So why should you do a placement year? How does a placement year fit into your degree? Your placement will occur between the second and final year of your degree and will typically start in the summer after your second year exams. During your placement you may be working in a different part of the UK or overseas; however, you will still be registered as a University of Essex student.

Competition for work placements is very high. Some employers start the recruitment for placement year vacancies in the summer before your second academic year so it’s important to start your preparations as soon as possible.

Our Employability and Careers Centre and your Department, School or Centre will work with you to identify and secure placements. However, it is ultimately your responsibility to apply and secure one. You will be allocated an Academic Supervisor who will keep in contact with you throughout your placement and will give you advice on your academic assessments. Your Placement Supervisor will be a member of the employer you are working for and will help you manage your day-to-day work and support your learning and development. Your Faculty Placements Team can provide more information about placements for the particular sector or job role you are interested in, and will also be available to help and offer advice to you and your Placement Provider throughout your placement.

1.3 PRE-PLACEMENT PREPARATION

Are you registered on a placement year? If you are not, you will need to check that your Department/School offer placement year degrees. If they do offer placement year degrees, get in touch with your Faculty Placements Team. If you are registered on a placement year degree, check the academic requirements for undertaking a placement year, which will vary across Departments/Schools. You may need to obtain a certain mark in your first year and attend certain lectures or workshops. Have a look at the Rules of Assessment for your course to fully understand what you will need to commit to.

If you are unsure which Faculty your Department belongs to, please go to Section 8 to see the Faculty and Department structures.

A work placement is a period of work experience embedded into your degree and there are different types of work placements that can vary in length, ranging from a few weeks to a whole year:

- **PLACEMENT YEAR**
  - A placement equivalent of a year’s academic study (between 30-52 weeks). Your placement will occur between the second and final year of your degree.

- **SIX MONTH PLACEMENTS**
  - Some Departments offer the opportunity to do six month placements during the Spring and Summer terms of your second year of study.

- **TERMLY PLACEMENTS**
  - A placement equivalent to an academic term (12-15 weeks). This might be full or part-time.

- **VACATION INTERNSHIP**
  - A short-term placement taken during Christmas, Easter or Summer vacations.

- **PROJECTS**
  - Negotiated pieces of work, either group-based or individual, which form part your degree course and are supervised by an academic and the employer. These usually take place in your final year.

A work placement is a great way for you to gain an insight into particular industry or role, improve your employability and gain valuable experience that will boost your chances of securing a graduate position. When you graduate, the work placement will be recognised on your degree transcript and HEAR.
It’s important to gain professional work experience before you graduate. In a recent survey:

Over a third of recruiters who took part in the research repeated their warnings from previous years – that graduates who have had no previous work experience at all are unlikely to be successful during the selection process and have little or no chance of receiving a job offer for their organisations’ graduate programmes.

High Flyers, 2017

By undertaking a work placement, this experience will:
- Help you to develop professional skills sought after by graduate employers.
- Enable you to learn more about a particular sector, employer or job role.
- Allow you to apply your academic knowledge in a practical working environment.
- Provide you with ideas for future career pathways.

In terms of finding the right placement for you, many employers offer placements. Large multi-national employers often have established placement year programmes and shorter opportunities over vacation periods. These are highly competitive but offer excellent development opportunities and are often used by employers to nurture future talent. Details about these schemes will usually be found on employer websites. Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are increasingly offering a range of placements. These employers often allow students to undertake a wider variety of tasks and responsibilities, and opportunities tend to be less competitive but do require more research to find and secure.

Will you get paid during your placement? Most employers pay placement students a salary. However, in some cases, employers may offer placements that are unpaid or only offer expenses (employers may refund some of your costs, such as travel, but they do not actually pay you a salary). You are most likely to encounter unpaid/expenses-only placements if you are applying for roles in charities, politics, media and the arts. Employers should indicate in their advertising if a post is unpaid or only offering expenses. If you are in doubt, contact the employer and ask for advice.

For paid placement years, you will normally need to spend a minimum of 40 weeks on a University-approved placement. For unpaid or expenses-only placements, you will normally need to spend a minimum of 30 weeks on a University-approved placement.

So how do you secure a placement? You will be responsible for finding your own placement. You need to proactively research careers and opportunities that are of interest and submit applications to relevant employers. As well as national schemes, the University will advertise all types of opportunities, specifically for Essex students. Your Department, Faculty Placement Teams and the Employability and Careers Centre will offer information and guidance that will support you with this process. The University of Essex are always updating CareerHub with opportunities and a variety of placements specifically for Essex students:

- [www.careerhub.essex.ac.uk](http://www.careerhub.essex.ac.uk)

There are numerous job sites online, which you may have used in the past when looking for work. Placements can be found through these, although there are specialist placement websites advertising only work placement opportunities. [www.ratemyplacement.co.uk](http://www.ratemyplacement.co.uk) is probably the biggest website listing national placement vacancies. They also act as a host for reviews on a wide variety of organisations that have been written by students, for students, based on their experience with the company. [Rate My Placement] list reviews for all sorts of organisations, not just those who advertise with them so definitely check them out.

Other placement-specific websites that you may want to take a look at are:

- [www.indied.co.uk/student-placement-jobs](http://www.indied.co.uk/student-placement-jobs)
- [www.targetjobs.co.uk/internships](http://www.targetjobs.co.uk/internships)
- [www.milkround.com](http://www.milkround.com)
- [www.e4s.co.uk/search/internship-jobs](http://www.e4s.co.uk/search/internship-jobs)
- [www.totaljobs.com/jobs/placement](http://www.totaljobs.com/jobs/placement)
- [www.linkedin.com/jobs](http://www.linkedin.com/jobs)
- [www.indeed.co.uk/student-placement-jobs](http://www.indeed.co.uk/student-placement-jobs)

There are also sector specific websites for work placements available, as well as employers advertising directly on their own websites. Frequently check online and watch out for application deadlines; it is not uncommon for vacancies to close early so do not leave it until the last minute! If no deadline is stated, they will usually close for applications once they have recruited, so get your application in nice and early!

What is the application process? Applying for a placement in a large organisation is very similar to applying for a graduate job; the majority of employers will ask applicants to complete an online application form and attach a CV. If the employer progresses your application, you might be asked to complete an online psychometric test and/or have a telephone interview. If you are successful at that stage, you will normally be invited to an assessment centre and/or a final interview. You can practice psychometric tests online.

- [www.essex.ac.uk/careers/applications/tests.aspx](http://www.essex.ac.uk/careers/applications/tests.aspx)
The Employability and Careers Centre and your Faculty Placements Team will support you in securing a placement through workshops, drafting CVs, the application process, mock interviews and any other concerns that you may have. Moodle is also available and is a really good online tool to help you secure your Placement Year:

►moodle.essex.ac.uk/enrol/index.php?id=5586

If you are a second year student, under the Rules of Assessment, you must undertake some form of pre-departure training before starting your placement year. This means you should attend the Placement Year Pre-Departure Conference, which usually takes place in May or June every year. The Pre-Departure Conference will help you prepare for your placement and ensure you make a professional impression in the workplace. It is also a unique opportunity to meet other placement year students and enhance your networking skills.

You will need to be registered on a Placement Year degree before you start your placement. Check with your Department/School if a placement year is an option and when they recommend transferring (if you are not already registered). To transfer, you will need to complete an online course change form:

►www.essex.ac.uk/students/course-admin/changing-course.aspx

1.4 ACCEPTING A PLACEMENT OFFER

Once you have been offered a placement, you will need to send the information to your Faculty Placements Team to approve. This is because some additional checks may need to take place before you can accept the role. To be approved by your Department/Faculty Placement Teams, your placement must:

- Meet the academic requirements set out in your placement module. (For example, it must start at a suitable time of year, offer relevant experience and be of sufficient length).
- Provide a placement that enables you to meet the learning outcomes required by your degree course.
- Offer work that is at a junior professional level. This means that the work you undertake is challenging and enables you to develop new professional skills. However, whilst the role at times may require you to do some routine tasks such as photocopying and/or filing, this sort of task should not be the main focus of your role.
- Provide you with a Placement Supervisor who will support your workplace development and liaise with your Academic Supervisor at the University.
- Provide you with a safe workplace environment that complies with the University Health and Safety requirements.
- Provide you with a workplace environment that complies with the University Equality and Diversity requirements.
- If you are an international student with a Tier 4 visa, your placement must comply with the requirements of your visa set by the Home Office.
- Work placements can be undertaken in the UK or abroad but must be approved by the Faculty Placements Team and your Department/School before you can commence.

Your placement must be approved by the University prior to the first day of the Autumn Term of the academic year in which you are due to start your placement. You will return to the University to recommence your studies in the Autumn Term in the following academic year.

Once you have secured a placement, you will be required to complete some mandatory formal placement paperwork known as a Tri-partite Agreement. This is a 3-way agreement that is signed by you, the University (Academic Supervisor), and the Placement Provider. You will need to read through the Tri-partite Agreement as everyone’s roles and responsibilities will be outlined. Your Faculty Placements Team will help you with this once you have secured a placement and an Academic Supervisor.

1.5 ACCOMMODATION, TUITION, TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL

Where will you live during your placement? Your placement could be situated anywhere in the country or overseas and you will be required to find suitable accommodation in the area. Your employer may be able to offer advice regarding local accommodation. It will be your responsibility to secure suitable accommodation. Here is a list of some UK accommodation websites to get you started, although please note that some of these websites/companies will charge fees:

►www.airbnb.co.uk
►www.rightmove.co.uk/property-to-rent
►www.zoopla.co.uk/to-rent/flats
►www.gumtree.com/flats-and-houses-for-rent
►www.gumtree.com/short-term-rent
►www.unite-students.com
►www.studentblock.co.uk
►www.spareroom.co.uk

You should ensure you have fully prepared your plans for travelling to and from the workplace. Some students like to do a trial run first to give a better idea of timings and to familiarise themselves with the route. If you are relying on public transport, do you know an alternative route if there are delays or closures? If you will be driving to work, what is your back up option if your car needs to go to the garage or breaks down? You should ensure you plan ahead so that you already know what do if you ever find yourself in these circumstances.

It might be worth checking with your Placement Provider whether they have anything in place to support employees using public transport, as some employers offer staff discounts on seasonal bus passes through a salary sacrifice scheme. If you are working in London, your Placement Provider may offer a similar scheme for train fares where they pay your travel through and you will always come back with TFL on their 18+ Oyster Card:

►tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/adult-discounts-and-concessions/18-student

Most employers allow employees to use a private vehicle to drive to and from the workplace. However, some employers may require the use of a business vehicle, which will affect your insurance policy. As a result, if you drive you should ensure that your car insurance policy covers business use whilst you are on placement. It is your responsibility to ensure that your insurance policy is appropriate for the business requirements whilst you are on placement. You should check with your Placement Supervisor if you are unsure of the business requirements surrounding the use of vehicles whilst on placement.
If you are on a paid placement, you will receive a salary from your employer. You will pay tax that will be deducted from your wages by your employers throughout your placement. During your placement you will still have student status, which means you are exempt from paying council tax. You will need to prove this with a council tax exemption certificate, which you can request online:

![www.gov.uk/council-tax/discounts-for-full-time-students](www.gov.uk/council-tax/discounts-for-full-time-students)

Tax Years run from 6th April to 5th April, which means that a placement year is likely to cross two tax years. Students will have to pay Income Tax and National Insurance (NI) on earnings that are above their personal allowance (this is the amount of income that no tax needs to be paid on); this also applies to international students. You should ensure that you check your personal tax allowance and keep all pay-related documents safe, as you may need them in case of claiming any tax back after their placement. Claiming a tax refund through HM Revenue and Customs is free. Students do not need to pay an employer to claim a tax refund on their behalf. For forms and further information regarding getting a tax refund:

![www.gov.uk/claim-tax-refund/too-much-tax-taken-from-your-pay](www.gov.uk/claim-tax-refund/too-much-tax-taken-from-your-pay)

International students can claim any overpayment of tax before they leave the UK. Shortly before they leave the UK, they should complete form P85 ‘Leaving the UK – getting your tax right’. This form tells HMRC that they are leaving the UK and makes a claim for repayment of any overpaid tax for the year of departure. If a student has the form P45 from a former employer, they should send parts 2 and 3 to HMRC together with form P85:


If you are a home-funded student you may wish to contact Student Finance England for a reduced rate maintenance loan whilst on your placement year or to discuss your individual situation:

![www.gov.uk/apply-online-for-student-finance](www.gov.uk/apply-online-for-student-finance)

**2 PLACEMENT SUPPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY**

### 2.1 PLACEMENT SUPPORT

What support can you expect from the University before your placement?

Placement preparation sessions either on a one-to-one or group basis will be available to help you learn about the process of finding, applying and interviewing for placement opportunities.

Additional Department and University events/services run throughout the year to help develop your career learning. For example, visits from top employers and alumni, opportunities to practice recruitment tests (such as psychometric tests), individual careers interviews and CV workshops:

![www.essex.ac.uk/careers/events](www.essex.ac.uk/careers/events)

There will be opportunities to gain skills and experiences for your CV through schemes such as Frontrunners, Essex Interns, UROPS, Student Reps/Ambassadors and participation in Student Societies:

![www.essex.ac.uk/careers/job_hunting/on_campus.aspx](www.essex.ac.uk/careers/job_hunting/on_campus.aspx)

You will receive clear information from your Department about the academic assessment and relevant deadlines during your placement.

You will also receive support from your Department and/or Faculty Placements Team with the completion of formal paperwork.

### 2.2 DISABLED STUDENTS

If you have additional needs such as disability or a long term health condition, you might like to get in touch with the Employability and Careers Centre (contact details are found in Section 8) to discuss any support you may need at application stage and while on placement. This includes: advice on placement schemes specifically for disabled students, support in arranging reasonable adjustments at interview and in the workplace, and talking through how/when to positively disclose disability. If you require specialist equipment to support you on placement you may be eligible to apply for Access to Work funding towards this. We want to ensure all students enjoy a safe and inclusive placement so please get in touch to let us know how we can support you.

### 2.3 WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DO NOT PASS YOUR PLACEMENT YEAR?

What will happen if you do not pass your placement year? Your placement year assessment is assessed on a pass/fail basis and does not count towards your final degree mark. The University will support you so that you can make the most of your placement. However, if you are not successful in passing the year or if you need to leave your placement for some reason, you may need to intermit for the rest of the academic year or receive a ‘fail’ for your placement year. Your Faculty Placements Team and Department will be able to advise you on further on your individual options.
3 WHILST ON PLACEMENT

3.1 ARRIVAL AND STARTING YOUR PLACEMENT

The most important thing you need to remember is that when you are out on placement you are employed by your Placement Provider, but will still be a student of the University of Essex. This means that you have a responsibility to act professionally to both the University and your Placement Provider at all times. You are an Ambassador. You are Essex.

Your placement is an integral and assessed part of your degree and you will therefore be expected to successfully complete a number of assessments in connection with your workplace experiences to demonstrate your learning. In most cases your assignments will be marked out of 100 and you will need to achieve a pass mark of 40%. When you have been allocated an Academic Supervisor, speak to them about how to submit your assignments.

Details of the specific assignments that you undertake for your placement module will be provided by your Department and will enable you to meet the following outcomes:

- An understanding of work roles and environments within a practical context.
- An aptitude to connect subject-specific theory to practice in a work environment.
- The ability to communicate with a wide range of colleagues and clients in a working environment.
- The capacity to work in a team within a work environment.
- Improve your personal and professional practice through a reflective approach within a work environment.

3.2 PLACEMENT SUPERVISION

All correspondence from your Faculty Placements Team will be to your Essex email address. You must remember to regularly login to your Essex email account to keep it active. You are advised not to rely on emails being redirected from your Essex address to your personal email address (e.g. Yahoo/Google/Hotmail) as sometimes these providers do not accept attachments, or they will file mail in the junk folder.

What support from the University can you expect during your placement?

Whilst you are on placement, you may receive regular contact with your Faculty Placements Team who will refer you to the appropriate sources of advice if you encounter a problem. They will keep in regular contact with your Placement Provider to ensure your placement is progressing satisfactorily.

You will receive regular contact with a named Academic Supervisor from your Department who will advise and support you on all issues relating to academic assessments and will refer you to the appropriate sources of advice if you encounter a problem whilst on placement. Your Academic Supervisor or Faculty Placements Team will also keep in regular contact with your Placement Provider to ensure your placement is progressing satisfactorily.

You will receive regular contact with a named Placement Supervisor from your Placement Provider who will support your work-based learning and development and help you manage your day-to-day workplace issues.

You will have continued access to University services whilst you are on placement e.g. the library, the Students’ Union.

You will receive clear information from your Department and the University about arrangements for your return to Essex after your placement has come to an end.
3.3 COMMUNICATION, QUESTIONS AND YOUR PLACEMENT ENVIRONMENT

It is natural to feel slightly nervous about starting a new job but try not to be too anxious as you will have been appointed a Placement Supervisor who will be the person to help you settle in, introduce you to other colleagues and will be the person to go to for any questions that you may have. You should ensure that you liaise with your Placement Supervisor on a regular basis to discuss your progress and to ensure that you meet personal objectives that you set yourself when you start your placement. It is useful to assess your objectives to reflect upon how your experience meets your academic requirements.

You will also liaise regularly with your Academic Supervisor who will be interested to hear how your placement is progressing and will be your first point of contact if you have any other questions that you feel they can help you with. Your Faculty Placements Team may also keep in touch to hear how you do on placement and will also assist where necessary if you have any concerns. However, by the end of your first few weeks you will have developed your communication skills and will feel much more comfortable about your role’s responsibilities and the placement environment.

Stay positive and leave bad moods at home! We all have days when we are not feeling our best, but it is best not to share this at work. Negativity can bring everyone down, so if you are negative about something at work, find a way to improve it, if something from home is making you down leave it at home and confide in someone outside work. Stay work-focused and do not let your private life impact on your job. You should try to have an upbeat attitude and be a problem solver as much as possible.

Try and stay out of office politics. Wherever you work there will be some form of office politics and gossip. Keep away from it, you could get yourself in trouble and most definitely do not comment about it on social media – (in fact be safe and don’t mention work on social media).

Respect Others – no matter what their role is in the organisation. Being courteous and respectful – friendly, polite and well-mannered makes you someone people want to work with. Remember – you never know what people’s professional working relationships are – treat everyone the same.

3.4 SETTING AND ACHIEVING PERSONAL GOALS

Many students cite their placement year as the highlight of their degree. As well as managing real responsibilities and projects, there is much to get involved with. Take advantage of any opportunities that are offered to you – you never know what benefits could come as a result of getting involved!

Many placement students have the opportunity to work on projects outside of their ‘job description’ and get involved in an employer’s corporate responsibility or community investment work. For example, we have had students organise volunteering days or large fundraising events. This is a great way of demonstrating to future employers you can work within a team and have organisational and motivational skills.

So, get involved in whatever you can and make the most of your year!

3.6 RECORDING YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS

On placement you will develop and gain a variety of skills that you will be required to translate and reflect upon through your academic assignments. As a performance management tool, recording your achievements is a good way of helping you plan, measure and evaluate your Placement Year effectively. You will be surprised by how much you will progress on placement from the time you begin to when you complete. An effective way of being able to compare is by visually documenting your progression:

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<th>Performance Evaluation</th>
<th>Week 4</th>
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<td>Problem solving or decision making</td>
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Irrespective of the job, focus on your personal growth and of your best outcome. I have learnt to expand my capabilities and skills whilst owning my flaws.

Vishrutee Bhurtan, SRLV Accountants
4 YOUR WORK PLACEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 YOUR WORKPLACE RESPONSIBILITIES

Although you will be on placement, you are still a student of the University of Essex and are therefore subject to the University’s Regulations, including the Disciplinary Regulations, which you have agreed to adhere to as a student of the University:

▶️ www.essex.ac.uk/about/governance/regulations/default.aspx

Before you go on placement we expect you to:

- **Take responsibility** for finding your own placement and have it approved in advance of the start date.
- **Keep records** of all applications made and their outcomes.
- **Respond** to all communications from your Department, the University and external placement providers promptly.
- **Conduct** yourself professionally in all your dealings with potential Placement Providers and external organisations, remember that you are representative of the University and any poor conduct may impact on the University's reputation with external organisations. You should seek advice from the Placements Teams in your Department/Faculty if you are unsure how to communicate with an employer.
- **Go above and beyond what the company expects of you. You will stand out and have the opportunity of good job security after you graduate.**

  Sapna Tanna, KidsOut

- **Once you have accepted a placement offer (either verbally and/or in writing), ensure you complete and return any formal paperwork required** by the employers and the University as soon as possible and within specified deadlines.
- **Complete any pre-placement academic assignments and preparation sessions** set by your Department within set deadlines.
- **If you are an international student with a Tier 4 visa, ensure you are aware of, and comply with, any regulations set by the Home Office relating to your visa and any work permits.**
- **If you have any queries regarding visas and your right to work in the UK, contact Student Support at the University (contact details are found in Section 8).**
During your placement we expect you to:

- Conduct yourself professionally in all your dealings with your employer and external organisations, remembering that you are representative of the University and any poor conduct may impact on the University’s reputation.
- Abide by all workplace regulations and practices of your employer, including those relating to Health and Safety, absence management and confidentiality.
- Demonstrate good attendance and punctuality and inform your employer and the University immediately if you are unable to attend work.
- Dress and behave appropriately for the workplace.
- Engage with all reasonable opportunities for development during your placement.
- Continue to check your University email account, responding to all communications from your Academic Supervisor, your Faculty Placements Team and your Department promptly.
- Liaise with your Academic Supervisor to arrange a suitable time for a workplace visit (or alternative).
- If you are an overseas student, ensure you continue to comply with any Tier 4 visa regulations and keep the University up-to-date with your address and contact details.
- Notify your Department and your Placement Provider of any problems that may prevent successful completion of the placement as soon as possible.
- Complete any academic assignments set by your Department within set deadlines.

After your placement we expect you to:

- Complete any post-placement academic assignments set by your Department within set deadlines.

After your placement we suggest that you:

- Attend any welcome back Placement Year events
- Engage with the Employability and Careers Centre by articulating and sharing your experience with students thinking about undertaking a placement. Contributing to workshops and events is another area that can be recorded on your CV.

4.2 HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

During the first few weeks on your placement, you will receive an induction covering your employer’s Health and Safety policies, amongst other regulations in the workplace. These procedures will cover a wide scope of areas providing information on who to contact if you are too ill to come to work, how to report an accident in the workplace and what you may or may not do in the working environment.

All procedures are in place to keep everybody as safe as possible, therefore do not disregard these policies even if you think they may be overly cautious. If you do not receive this you should ask your line manager for the information. Health and Safety issues do not just relate to work; think about your safety with regards to where you are living, how you get to work and even in your spare and social time. To understand more about Health and Safety in the workplace, please refer to Moodle:

- moodle.essex.ac.uk

If your course is subject to the Fitness to Practise Procedure, you will have additional responsibilities regarding your conduct and professional suitability, as outlined in relevant regulatory and/or professional body codes of practice. You will have been notified upon registration if your course is subject to the terms of this procedure. Failure to meet the relevant responsibilities can lead to the Fitness to Practise Procedures being invoked. Please check with your Department if you think this procedure may apply to you.

4.3 REGISTERING AT THE START OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR

During your placement year you are still a student at the University of Essex. At the start of every academic year you will need to register and your placement year is no exception.

As you will not be studying on campus, you will need to register online through a link that is different to other students. The Progress Team will email your Essex email directly to let you know what you need to do, but will only do so when we have confirmed you are on placement.

If you fail to register as a student before the deadline, the University may think that you are not on placement. As a result, you may have to interrupt the year and it will not count towards your final degree mark.

4.4 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND DISCRIMINATION

Equality, Diversity and Discrimination are very important issues for the University of Essex as well as for employers, and are taken very seriously. Before you start working, you will learn about – and get training in – the employer’s Equality and Diversity policy, which is required by law. This also means that you have the right to an equal workplace, free from discrimination or harassment. If you feel that you are discriminated against, or harassed, you should contact the appropriate person listed in the undergraduate students’ handbook immediately. You may wish to refer to Student Support or the University’s harassment support network:

- www.essex.ac.uk/life/facilities/support.aspx
- www.essex.ac.uk/equality/harassment
- www.essex.ac.uk/equality

Outside the UK, legislation on equality, diversity and discrimination may vary. However, because you are a student of the University of Essex, the Equality Act under which discrimination is unlawful still applies if your placement takes place abroad. If you feel that your Placement Provider does not comply with it, you should discuss with the appropriate contact person in your Department immediately.
5 PLACEMENTS ABROAD

5.1 MONEY, FUNDING AND INTERNATIONAL GRANTS

By studying/working abroad it is likely that you will develop skills that will be very attractive
to potential employers and can potentially be of great benefit in career terms. Living abroad,
advancing to a new environment and culture, developing confidence, taking risks and most
probably gaining new language skills are all valuable assets to employers.

Whilst on placement you will need to manage your expenses to ensure you have enough
to live on. Essex Abroad offer advice and guidance on how to budget before starting your
placement, as well as information on which bursaries, grants and scholarships you may be
eligible for. These can be found on their webpages or you can contact the team directly:
E eagrants@essex.ac.uk

Funding is not always guaranteed, and often needs to be applied for. Make sure you research
the eligibility criteria before submitting any applications.

You can find out if you are eligible for any scholarships or grants offered by Essex Abroad at:
▶ www.essex.ac.uk/essexabroad/study/funding.aspx

We also recommend that you research external funding opportunities offered by the host
university or Government/Embassy/Trusts in the country you are visiting.

To help prepare you for how much you need to budget in particular countries, Essex Abroad has
budget guides for individual countries. You can view these online, and download a blank template
to plan your own budget in line with this:
▶ www.essex.ac.uk/essexabroad/prepare/budget.aspx

5.2 OVERSEAS HEALTH AND SAFETY

Your health, safety and security when working or studying overseas are extremely important.
Safety standards in many non-UK countries are not as good as those in the UK. There may
be hazards that you do not usually worry about, such as disease, natural disasters, poisonous
animals or civil unrest. When things go wrong the lack of familiarity with the country, its cultural
differences and language barriers can make a relatively minor incident into a major incident.
However, with good preparation many of the potential travel pitfalls can be avoided.
Please visit the Health and Safety pages of the Essex website for more detailed information about each of
these topics:
▶ www.essex.ac.uk/health-safety/activities/overseas-travel.aspx

Important things for you to research and arrange are:
- Travel insurance
- Online Security Training
- Have the contact details of local emergency and host institution services on hand at all times

Daniela Otuagomah,
St Maarten’s Ministry
of Tourism

I suffered numerous rejections whilst looking for a placement. However, your determination and resilience will land you that dream job!

20
21
Student Placement Handbook
Student Placement Handbook
5.3 ADAPTING TO CULTURAL CHANGE

Many students who study or work abroad often find a change of culture, depending on where they go. This may be in the form of new food, unfamiliar road signs, no decent tea bags, different tasting chocolate – all seemingly little things that can often cause big emotional reactions. Culture shock is defined as feelings of disorientation and homesickness when familiar surroundings change, and it can affect anyone spending any length of time in unfamiliar environments. Essex Abroad offers a range of resources to help you research and prepare for visiting a country with a different culture:

www.essex.ac.uk/essexabroad/prepare/default.aspx

5.4 IMPORTANT DOCUMENTATION

Before you go on a placement year abroad, you will need to consider certain documentation that you will need. Both your Faculty Placements Team and Essex Abroad can help make sure you have the following prepared:

- Tri-party Agreement
- Passport
- Visa
- Resident’s permit
- Insurance/healthcare documentation
- Accommodation
- Employer Health and Safety form
- Online Security Training
- Learning and Grant Agreement (if necessary)
- Arrival and departure certificates

In certain countries, you may need to apply for a residence permit or register with the local council/police after your arrival. The relevant embassy and/or your host institution should be able to advise you on the requirements but it is a good idea to research this before arriving in your host country so that you know what to expect:


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PROFESSIONALISM IN THE WORKPLACE

6.1 THINKING ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

Your Personal Brand is important as it is made up of your vision, purpose, skills, beliefs and attitudes. Your Personal Brand is also made up of your image, your behaviour and your emotional maturity and so you should be self-aware of what and how you speak and present yourself whilst remembering to be authentic.

To strengthen your Personal Brand it is always useful to:

- Volunteer for assignments or take positions of responsibility.
- Routinely ask for feedback and reflect on this.
- Write articles, blogs, tweet etc.
- LinkedIn; comment on discussions, include presentations, articles etc.
- What happens if you Google your name? This is useful to consider your Personal Brand objectively and how a prospective employer would see you.

6.2 TIME MANAGEMENT AND BALANCING YOUR WORKLOAD

Time-management in the workplace is very important and demonstrates to your Placement Provider about your organisational and time keeping skills. It is always useful to keep either a hard copy or digital calendar/diary by inputting tasks and deadlines; make lists and remember to reassess your workload accordingly. If you struggle with your workload, speak to your Placement Supervisor who will help you manage effectively.

6.3 PUNCTUALITY, BEHAVIOUR AND DRESS CODE

You have a responsibility to follow your Placement Provider’s organisational policies, to respect the confidentiality of your employer’s business and to behave professionally at all times. This should all be explained to you as part of your induction in your first week on placement when you learn about your work environment in context.

Punctuality is important when undertaking professional employment and your work placement should be considered no different. You should ensure that you are on time for work everyday and if you think you may be late into work, you should inform your Placement Provider as soon as you are able to. Lateness is not only rude but it implies you have poor organisational skills or are disinterested. It’s important not just for start times but also applies to returning from coffee or lunch breaks. Also make sure you meet deadlines for any projects or tasks allocated to you.

You should dress appropriately, smartly and professionally at all times when undertaking your placement. Regardless of what you will typically be wearing on a day to day basis, you should still always be clean, neat and tidy in your appearance.
6.4 DEALING WITH POTENTIAL PLACEMENT PROBLEMS

For the majority of students, everything goes incredibly well and we hear fantastic success stories. On some rare occasions, students may have difficulties on placement. This can be down to a variety of different reasons from personal circumstances to disagreements with a Placement Provider.

If you experience any problems during your placement, your first point of contact is your Academic Supervisor or your Faculty Placements Team. Any student experiencing dissatisfaction with any Departmental matter, whether academic or otherwise, is encouraged to try to resolve it informally in the first instance. If you are unable to resolve a complaint, you should do so in line with the University’s Complaints Procedure.

In the UK, besides your placement-specific rights, you have the same rights as every individual working in the UK. You can get information on basic employment rights on the Citizens Advice Bureau website:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

If your placement is abroad, different laws and regulations might apply. The rights at work that you are entitled to in the UK are no longer applicable when you work abroad. In consultation with the Essex Abroad Team, make sure you understand your rights abroad. One source of information is the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website:

www.gov.uk/browse/abroad

6.4 DEALING WITH POTENTIAL PLACEMENT PROBLEMS

7 END OF YOUR PLACEMENT

7.1 RETURNING TO UNIVERSITY

Once you have completed your placement, it is always a nice gesture to write to your Placement Provider to thank them and to discuss references. You should also ensure that you complete any post-placement assignments set by your Department within set deadlines.

As a returning Final Year student to the University, you will need to ensure you have registered. You will receive an email to your Essex account informing you when you will need to do this.

If you are a student returning from a Placement Year (in the UK and overseas), you will not be guaranteed University accommodation at the Colchester Campus; however, you will be given priority above other home and EU Undergraduate students who are on the waiting list.

Accommodation Essex provides application forms directly to Essex Abroad for returning Study Abroad students and students that undertook their placement abroad. However, all students returning from their placement at the Southend Campus will qualify for accommodation on Campus.

The Students’ Union’s house-finding service SU Lets will be able to help you find the perfect place to live. The Students’ Union Advice Centre can offer information about tenant rights and responsibilities, about repairs, repossession, eviction, harassment by landlords, contracts, deposits and much more.

www.essex.ac.uk/accommodation/support/student_lets.aspx

What support can you expect from the University after your placement?

- You will receive clear feedback on your placement assignments.
- There will be opportunities to provide feedback on the placement experience.
- You will receive continued careers support from the University to help you secure a graduate job (including access to paid internships offered exclusively to Essex graduates).

7.2 REFLECTION, SKILLS AND UPDATING YOUR CV

Once you have returned to the University, to widen your prospects of professional employment for when you graduate, you should update your CV and LinkedIn account with your relevant work experience gained from your Placement Year. It would a good idea to reflect upon your academic assignments that you completed throughout your Placement Year alongside your recorded achievements (see Section 3.6).

7.3 CAREERS ADVICE

The Employability and Careers Centre run a range of workshops to support students’ individual career paths. These sessions offer support surrounding self-awareness, identifying your aims, understanding your working style and anything else that may concern you. To schedule a meeting, please go to Section 8 for contact details.

Get involved with extra-curricular activities, like clubs and societies to get as much experience as possible. Have the confidence to sell yourself - no one else can do it for you!

Cameron Nuttall, TE Connectivity

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8 CONTACT DETAILS

8.1 FACULTIES AND DEPARTMENTS

Each Department is situated within one of three Faculties. Below are a list of all Departments and contact details for the Faculty Placement Teams:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Science and Health</th>
<th>Social Sciences</th>
<th>Humanities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biological Sciences (School of)</td>
<td>Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies</td>
<td>East 15 Acting School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science &amp; Electronic Engineering (School of)</td>
<td>Economics (Department of)</td>
<td>History (Department of)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Social Care (School of)</td>
<td>Essex Business School</td>
<td>Human Rights Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical Sciences (Department of)</td>
<td>Government (Department of)</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Studies Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology (Department of)</td>
<td>Institute for Social and Economic Research</td>
<td>Law (School of)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport, Rehabilitation and Exercise Sciences (School of)</td>
<td>Language and Linguistics (Department of)</td>
<td>Literature, Film and Theatre Studies (Department of)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sociology (Department of)</td>
<td>Philosophy and Art History (School of)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>UK Data Archive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faculty Placement Teams

E sh-placements@essex.ac.uk  
E ss-placements@essex.ac.uk  
E hum-placements@essex.ac.uk

8.2 STUDENT SERVICES

Students seeking advice and support from the University should be directed to either the Student Services Hub or the Students Union:

Student Services Hub
T 01206 874000  
E askthehub@essex.ac.uk  
Drop-in Silberrad Centre (1st floor), Mon – Fri from 9am – 5pm

Students’ Union
T 01206 874034  
E suadvice@essex.ac.uk  
Drop-in Square 3 (next to Lloyds Bank)  
▶ www.essexstudent.com/advice/

8.3 ESSEX ABROAD

Students seeking advice from Essex Abroad should contact:

T 01206 872632  
E saoadmin@essex.ac.uk

8.4 EMPLOYABILITY AND CAREERS CENTRE

Students seeking advice and support from the University’s Employability and Careers Centre should contact:

T 01206 872494  
E careers@essex.ac.uk

8.5 EMERGENCY PROCESSES FOR PLACEMENT STUDENTS

If you are a student that is off campus and in need of immediate emergency assistance in the UK, you should dial 999. For non-urgent issues contact:

- Police 101  
- Health service 111

If you have a serious issue and need to make contact with the University outside of office hours, there is a 24-hour security at our Colchester Campus. You can call the security team on 01206 872125.

If you are worried because you think you are likely to be in danger and at risk of any form of harm as a result of your placement, you should contact your Placements Team as soon as possible. As a student at the University of Essex, you should familiarise yourself with who to contact and what to do in an emergency. There is also advice on personal safety:

▶ www.essex.ac.uk/students/campus/emergency.aspx  
▶ www.essex.ac.uk/students/experience/safety.aspx

If you are undertaking a placement abroad, you should make yourself aware of the local emergency contact numbers. Please be aware that 999 is NOT the emergency contact number for police, fire and ambulance services in other countries. You should keep the University of Essex informed of any emergency as we may be able to help. The emergency number of the University is +44 1206 872222 and is staffed 24/7 365 days of the year. You should also have a copy of the contact details of your employer easily to hand.