

Year in Employment – Frequently Asked Questions for staff

Introducing the Year in Employment

What is the Year in Employment?

The Year in Employment is an institution-wide placement programme, which will give our undergraduate students the opportunity to take a year out of their studies to obtain valuable work experience. The Year in Employment forms a key part of the Employability strand of the University's Education Strategy, which seeks to significantly increase placement provision at the University of Southampton.

Why are we introducing the Year in Employment?

The Year in Employment is the University's response to the Wilson Review (BIS, 2013) which stated that universities should encourage sandwich degrees and should reflect the benefits to all parties from the enhanced employment outcomes arising from them¹. Research shows that placements are increasingly important to students:

- 92% of students specifically stated that it was important to be provided with placements, work experience and internships but only 27% of our students actively engage in placement activity. Out of the 20 Universities surveyed, only 3 fell below the 27% mark
- Nearly 50% of top graduate recruiters state that graduates with no previous work experience are unlikely to be successful during their selection processes and have little or no chance of receiving a job offer
- 31% of graduate vacancies went to graduates who had previously worked for their organisation, either through internships, vacation schemes or industrial placements².

What are the benefits to the students of taking the Year in Employment?

- Gain valuable work experience
- Develop a portfolio of transferable employability skills which can be evidenced through the graduate recruitment process
- Enable career inspiration, motivation and more informed career choices

What are the benefits to the University of the Year in Employment?

- Ensures that we continue to attract students within a highly competitive marketplace, where other universities are increasingly focused upon expanding work placement provision
- Our position in league tables is directly influenced by the performance of our graduates in the Graduate Outcomes survey. This programme is expected to ensure we maintain and improve further upon recent positive performance
- Promotes increased collaboration with industry
- Enhances the academic performance of participating students

Why is it preferable for students to complete the Year in Employment rather than suspend?

The Year in Employment provides better support for students on placement compared to suspension of studies. Remaining enrolled to the University allows students to access services like the library, the Students' Union, Enabling Services and others, which wouldn't be an option if they suspended their studies. Furthermore, as well as ensuring the

¹ Wilson Review, BIS 2013

² High Fliers Research Ltd 'The Graduate Market 2015'

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placement fulfils our health and safety requirements and offers a worthwhile experience, the Work Experience Team help prepare students for their placements ensuring students can make the most of their experience throughout the year and in the future.

In addition, the dedicated Work Experience Team are well placed to help grow the number of students undertaking placements, the benefits of which have been expressed. Finally, the Year in Employment offers a better service to placement providers as we provide a point of contact with them before and during the student's placement. This helps organisations benefit more from the placement resulting in continued collaboration in the future.

How long is the Year in Employment placement?

Students are required to spend a minimum of 30 weeks on placement in a full-time capacity to meet the requirements of a 'Degree with Year in Employment'. The placement length for International students cannot exceed 33.01% of the duration of their degree programme.

When can students commence their placement?

Students can commence their placement from the end of Semester 2 after their second year, regardless of whether they are on a 3 or a 4 year degree programme.

Who will support the Year in Employment?

There is a Board of Studies supporting the Year in Employment. In addition, there will be a dedicated central Work Experience Team, within the Careers and Employability Service, managing processes and supporting placement providers and students.

What is the role of academic staff?

Faculty academic staff are asked to promote the Year in Employment to students as a worthwhile opportunity to gain work experience and to signpost students to the Work Experience Team for further information. Beyond that, they will not be expected to play a large role in supporting students either before or during the Year in Employment. The Careers and Employability Service have comprehensive support available to students, and a team that will provide excellent advice and guidance across all disciplines. The Work Experience Team sit within Careers and Employability and each student will have a dedicated advisor to offer support throughout the placement journey.

What is the role of Personal Academic Tutors?

Students embarking on a Year in Employment should discuss their decision with their Personal Academic Tutor. This conversation should cover:

- Reasons for taking the Year in Employment
- A discussion about how this may impact on module and dissertation choices for the final year(s) of study
- Any possible impact on a student's academic performance
- Tier 4 students should be advised to speak the Visas and Immigration Student Advisory Service before considering a placement. The Placement Team will also highlight this with Tier 4 students
- Signposting students to Careers and Employability for support with placement searching and applications

In addition, the Personal Academic Tutor should contact the student at least once each semester, in line with the University's policy on placements.

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Learning Outcomes and Assessments

Will the Learning Outcomes relate to the student's programme of study?

No, the Learning Outcomes for the Year in Employment are aligned to employability skills. On successful completion of this programme, students will be able to:

1. Discuss the various aspects of the industry in which they work, including the internal company structure and the wider landscape of their sector.
2. Describe the purpose of their role within the context of the business and the contribution it makes to the organisation as a whole.
3. Identify the skills, attributes and behaviours required for the sector in which they are placed.
4. Evaluate the development of their skills, attributes and behaviours over the course of the Year in Employment.
5. Identify areas for personal, and career development, and how these can be addressed.

Is the Year in Employment credit bearing?

No, the Year in Employment is not credit bearing, students will need to meet the learning outcomes, including the assessment of a piece of work relating to the Year in Employment. The Year in Employment will be assessed on a pass/fail basis.

Who will assess this?

The Careers and Employability Service in partnership with Faculty Employability Leads will be responsible for assessing the Year in Employment and will handle any enquiries or support needed by students.

How will the Year in Employment be recognised?

The Year in Employment programmes are being set up as new programme codes. This enables us to acknowledge students who take part in the programme. Students successfully completing the Year in Employment will leave with an amended award title e.g. BA Hons Economics with Year in Employment. The Year in Employment will also be recorded on the Diploma Supplement.

Eligibility

Which students can take part?

The Year in Employment is open to any undergraduate student enrolled at the University of Southampton on a programme that **does not** currently contain placement provision/ year abroad. See our download for a list of eligible programmes.

Can students on a Tier 4 visa participate?

Students fulfilling the eligibility requirements and studying on Tier 4 visas can undertake the Year in Employment, however there are significant additional costs associated due to [visa requirements](#). Students considering the Year in Employment should speak with the [Visa and Immigration Student Advice Service](#).

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Support for students: Before the placement

Who is responsible for sourcing the placements?

It is the responsibility of the student to source their placement. The University of Southampton will provide students with advice and guidance on sourcing strategies, and will continue to broker relationships with employers. This support will be undertaken by our Work Experience Team who are part of the Careers and Employability Service.

Who will be helping students to find placements?

The Careers and Employability Service and the Work Experience Team will provide a comprehensive support package for student before, during and on return from placement. This includes:

- 5 day a week drop in service for quick queries and advice in the Careers centre
- Longer bookable guidance appointments for more in-depth enquiries
- MyCareer Jobs Board with comprehensive listings of placement opportunities
- A wide range of workshops and training sessions covering topics such as CV preparation, applications, Assessment centres, psychometric testing, interview skills, finding work experience etc.
- Online resources and a comprehensive careers library
- Access to a wide range of on campus employer events including careers fairs and employer skills session, all designed to provide direct access to employers and build students understanding of the placement market
- 1:1 advice from the Work Experience Team

Will the placement be related to their course?

That is the choice of the student. They are welcome to take a placement that is related to their course, or alternatively, they can use the Year in Employment to investigate another sector.

Can a student do an unpaid placement?

As a University we would strongly recommend that a student looks for a paid placement. If a student decides to take an unpaid placement they will need to provide evidence that the job is of an appropriate level and will provide them with exceptional experience. It is also important that they consider the financial implications.

Support for students: During the placement

Will the student remain enrolled at the University during their placement year?

Yes, the student will remain enrolled at the University of Southampton during their placement year and will be entitled to access support services remotely.

Will the student be required to pay fees?

Yes, students taking the Year in Employment will pay a reduced fee of 20% of their usual tuition fee for their placement year.

If students were entitled to student finance in their previous years of study, the following applies but students should confirm with their student loan provider.

Tuition fee loan: Students will be able to borrow the amount needed for their tuition fees.

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Maintenance Loan: UK students undertaking a placement year can still apply for a reduced rate maintenance loan. This is not income assessed and payments will be made in 3 instalments.

Additional funding: If students are normally eligible for student finance and their placement is in an unpaid public service organisation e.g. a hospital, parliament etc., they may be entitled to the full maintenance loan that they would have received in their first or second year. Unless any circumstances have changed, if students were entitled to bursary from the University previously, they will not be entitled to these on the placement year.

This full maintenance loan and possible grants are not provided for students completing unpaid placements in non-public service roles e.g. fashion and media.

What support is provided to students when they are on placement?

The Work Experience Team is responsible for ensuring that students are supported on their placement year. The team will undertake all employer checks and ensure that each placement is risk assessed. The team will provide pastoral support for students on placement and will be the first point of contact for students and placement providers during the placement year. Contact takes the form of:

- On boarding support
- Two week check in call/email
- 1st placement visit within 6-14 weeks of start date unless the placement is outside the UK in which case a skype visit will occur
- Optional 2nd placement visit by Skype within 6-14 weeks of placement end date
- Additional contact as needed

Any issues that arise will be managed in the first instance by the Work Experience Team but escalated to other University services as required.

After the placement

What happens if a placement ends early?

If for any reason, a placement is terminated before the end of the second week of Semester 1, students have the opportunity to transfer back onto the final year of their taught programme.

If a placement is terminated after the end of the second week of Semester 1, and has not met the minimum requirement of 30 weeks/150 days of placement activity, the student is entitled to take up to four weeks to find and start another placement. If after four weeks, the student has not started another placement position, the student will be suspended. Fees will be pro-rata-ed according to normal university policies depending on when the student suspended. The student will be permitted to return to their final year of studies the following academic year, but will not receive the award ‘...with a Year in Employment’.

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What happens when the student returns after their placement?

Following the student's Year in Employment, they will be invited to a 'Reunion' event held by the Careers and Employability Service

Where can I find out more information?

If you have any further questions relating to the Year in Employment please contact a member of the Work Experience Team: Email: workexp@soton.ac.uk Tel: (0)23 8059 3501 (internal 23501)
