

Starting Points: Building your experience

Why Get Experience?

All types of experience, from voluntary work and involvement in clubs and societies to structured internship schemes are valued by employers. These experiences, along with academic achievement, can provide graduate employers with evidence that you have developed skills that will help you succeed in the workplace.

Clubs and Societies

No matter whether you join the juggling society or an academic subject related one, active participation can give you a great chance to develop the skills and experiences employers seek, for example:

- **event and financial planning:** organisation of sporting events and fundraising.
- **leadership:** organisation of events, captaincy of a sports team or being on the executive committee of a society.

Voluntary Work

Research shows that three quarters of employers would employ a candidate with voluntary experience over a candidate without. Voluntary work can show that, without the need for financial reward, you have the drive and enthusiasm to give something back to the community. It can be an excellent way to demonstrate your abilities and develop key skills. Contact Hallam Union Volunteering www.hallamstudentsunion.org/volunteering or visit www.do-it.org. You can get more information from the *Starting Points: Volunteering* leaflet.

Part time Work

Part time work can be a great way to build your experience and develop skills essential for gaining graduate employment. This could be term time or vacation work, temporary or ongoing and could be on campus or with a local company.

- jobs are advertised on Careers Central Jobs and Events via the employability tab on shuspace

Formal Work Experience Programmes

Many vacancies are filled by graduates who had prior experience of working for their organisation. Over 80% of the leading graduate recruiters in the UK offered paid programmes of work experience - for almost 12,000 students (High Fliers research 2014). The application process can often be highly competitive and closing dates can be early in the autumn term, so it is important to check.

- **Internships:** structured, paid periods of work (usually during the vacation). Traditionally internships were targeted at penultimate year students - two thirds of

graduate employers offer these programmes; however many employers are opening internships up to other year groups.

- **Industrial Placements:** students completing placements are more likely to have better degree classifications, to be employed and have higher salaries six months after graduating, than those who did not complete a placement. Contact your Faculty Placement Team - Placements are advertised on a Placement Database within departments.

Other Experience: consider participating in as many work based activities as possible through your course.

- attend employer presentations, skills workshops and Sheffield Hallam Fairs - all events can be found on Careers Central Jobs and Events - via the employability tab on shuspace

Speculative Applications and Networking

By using proactive approaches, contacts can be made in any career sector. Although it does not guarantee work experience it is a very useful way to find out more about professions. It is important to target any speculative approach, demonstrating your interest in the company or individual and what they do.

- use LinkedIn to identify contacts- attend one of our sessions to learn how to make the most of this resource.
- contact graduate recruitment teams of companies- they may be able to put you in touch with recent graduates.
- identify companies of interest using business directories such as [Yellow Pages](#), [UK Small Business Directory](#) and [Kompas](#) (available through the library gateway)
- use graduate careers websites such as Prospects and TARGETjobs to identify organisations within your area of interest, professional bodies and Skills Councils- which often have very useful employer directories.

Checklist

You can start building your experiences at any time. However, remember as your final year approaches time will be limited and you may have to start applying for positions as early as October so.....

- speak to an adviser to find out more about your options and where to look for these experiences.
- investigate your own career ideas.
- identify the skills and experiences required in your desired field of work.
- by taking advantage of the wide range of opportunities available, you can fill any gaps you may have in your skills and experiences and can demonstrate your understanding and commitment to a career.

Want to talk it through?

Contact Careers and Employment for further advice and support:

Phone: 0114 225 3752

Email: careers@shu.ac.uk

For further careers planning resources, go to shu.ac.uk/careers

This information is available in alternative formats on request.