

Work Placement Conditions

Faculty of Humanities, VU University Amsterdam

1. What type of work placement?

The Faculty of Humanities allows students to do two types of work placements: experience placements and research placements. In the Bachelor's phase, most placements are experience-oriented. Master's programmes may choose to only allow research placements, and can also impose additional requirements.¹

Characteristics of an *experience placement*:

- Students carry out work at the level of an academic university student or graduate. The work must be relevant to their degree programme and carried out with a large measure of independence.
- Career orientation: the placement offers students the opportunity to become acquainted with the job market. Students get the chance to put their expectations to the test in the working world.
- Experience in developing a work ethic, professional skills and putting academic knowledge and skills into practice.
- Building social skills: the placement offers students the opportunity to gain experience of working relations, conduct in the workplace, working hours, pace of work, work-related processes and work-related organizations.

Characteristics of *research placement* additionally include:

- Initiating and conducting independent research in the context of an organization that is relevant to the programme; this research is based on the needs (and/or research question) of that organization.
- Possibly also preparation for the research that will form the basis of the thesis. The results of the research carried out during the placement can be incorporated in the thesis, but only as a supplement to the research carried out for the Master's thesis itself.

2. Scope of the placement

Bachelor's students can do a placement worth 12 credits as part of their third-year minor, but are not required to do so. A placement of 12 credits is equivalent to at least 336 hours, which amounts to between eight and nine weeks' work on a full-time basis (including writing the placement report).²

¹ See the additional requirements for Master's programmes.

² With the exception of the Bachelor's in Philosophy, Politics & Economics.

Master's students can do a placement worth a maximum of 12 credits as part of their electives. This placement has to be completed before starting work on the Master's thesis. *Research Master's students* can only do a research placement worth a maximum of 12 credits. It is also possible to do a placement during the summer months.

3. Guidelines for placements

To be *approved*, work placements must in any case meet the following requirements:

- The placement must enable the student to take part in the working process; the workplace must be at the placement provider.
- The placement provides the opportunity to carry out work that corresponds to the level of the degree programme while challenging the student.
- The placement reflects the knowledge and skills acquired during the degree programme.
- Expert supervision is available at the placement location.

The *placement assignment* consists of two parts:

- Students should be given the opportunity to get to know the organization from the inside by working as part of their chosen organization and by contributing to ongoing activities. A placement at the student's current workplace or employer is not allowed.
- Students must also complete a clearly defined work-related or research assignment that offers sufficient opportunities to operate independently, be creative and take on a degree of responsibility while working for the placement provider.

Examples of possible work placements:

- organizing a conference/exhibition
 - producing a communication plan
 - developing/providing training sessions (e.g. in communication)
 - writing the history of an organization
 - conducting historical/art historical/literary/linguistic research
 - taking care of publicity and/or measuring the effect of a campaign
 - developing educational materials
 - participating in oral history projects, historical documentation for websites or other multimedia productions
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4. Supervision

Placement supervisor

During the placement, the student will remain in contact with the placement supervisor at the university. As a rule, they will be in touch once a month. The lecturer will have regular consultations

with the student during the placement to discuss how the placement is going, any problems at the placement location and how the placement assignment is progressing. The placement supervisor will visit the organization providing the placement at least once. The placement supervisor has a total of eight hours at their disposal to supervise a student during the placement. The placement contract contains a number of guidelines on this matter.

The placement supervisor is responsible for:

- Ensuring there is a meaningful relationship between the content of the programme and the placement and for assessing the level of the placement.
- Evaluating the trainee's activities and the placement report.
- Maintaining contact with the placement mentor: at least once at the beginning (mutual introductions and to discuss details of the assignment) and once at the end of the placement (to round off and assess the placement).

Placement mentor

The student will also be allocated a supervisor at the organization providing the placement: this is the placement mentor. In principle, supervision meetings with the placement mentor will take place twice a month. The placement supervisor at the programme will assess the end result in consultation with the placement mentor based on progress meetings and the placement report.

The placement mentor has the following responsibilities:

- Planning the trainee's activities
- Introduction to and supervision at the organization
- Work-oriented supervision
- Jointly assessing the student's activities and the placement report
- Maintaining contact with the placement supervisor

In disputes between the student, the placement supervisor and/or the placement mentor, the student should contact the *study advisor*.

5. Approval and placement contract

Students are responsible for finding their own work placement position. Before a student can start a placement, they have to ask a member of the programme's teaching staff to act as their placement *supervisor*. The student chooses a supervisor in consultation with the programme's placement coordinator and based on the content of the placement. The placement supervisor evaluates the nature of the placement in advance, indicates whether the placement is appropriate for the programme and, during the placement, ensures that the relationship between the nature of the programme and the placement remains intact. The placement supervisor will assess whether the placement meets the relevant guidelines (Section 3).

The student then draws up a *placement contract* in triplicate following the model designated by the Faculty of Humanities. The student signs the three copies of the contract and ensures they are also signed by the placement supervisor and the placement mentor at the organization providing the placement, and then submits them to:

1. The Examination Board (electronically)
2. The placement mentor at the placement organization
3. The placement supervisor at the programme

Once the Examination Board has approved and signed the placement contract, it will send a copy of the signed contract to the student. The signed original is put on file by the Examination Board. The student can start their placement as soon as it has been approved by the Examination Board. It is not possible to obtain credits for a placement that has not been approved *beforehand*.

The *placement contract* sets out the formal position of the trainee during their placement and contains at least the following information:

- Trainee's name, programme and student number, organization providing the placement, placement mentor and placement supervisor
- Number of credits
- Duration in weeks and working hours per week
- Aim of the placement
- Placement assignment and end product or products
- Agreements regarding supervision and assessment

6. Work plan

No later than two weeks after the start of the placement, the student will submit a work plan to their supervisor. The placement supervisor is responsible for ensuring that this plan meets academic standards and then signs it for approval. The student then submits an electronic copy of the work plan signed by the supervisor to the Examination Board to be filed.

A *work plan* details the practical implementation of the placement assignment, including an action plan, a timeline specifying various stages and clearly defined end products. One of the compulsory end products is a placement report. This work plan is produced by the student in consultation with the placement mentor.

The work plan must at least contain the following information:

- Trainee's name, programme and student number
- Scope of the placement assignment
- Description of the various stages of activity covering the entire period of the placement
- Duties in the context of the work carried out in the department

7. Placement report

To complete the placement, the student writes a placement report. Around one week should be reserved for producing this report. The style and academic level of the report will also be considered when assessing the placement report. The student has to submit their placement report to the placement supervisor and the placement mentor within four weeks of completing the placement. A separate placement report has to be written even in cases where the placement is integrated with a Bachelor's or Master's thesis. The Bachelor's or Master's thesis is then assessed separately, irrespective of the placement.

The report should be approximately 4,500 words (not counting appendices) and include the following:

- On the title page: the names of the trainee, supervisors, the organization providing the placement and the placement start and end dates
- Introduction, objective and work plan
- Description of the organization providing the placement
- Details of the placement assignment and a description of the result: was the placement conducted in accordance with the work plan?
- Possible suggestions for improvement
- Reflection written for a broader student audience on how academic training ties in with professional practice
- End product or products in an appendix

8. Assessment

The placement supervisor is responsible for the final assessment of the placement. This assessment is based on the following documents:

- Placement report
- End product or products
- Assessment by the placement mentor
- Assessment form completed by the placement supervisor

The supervisor will announce the assessment result within three weeks of the submission of the placement report. Once the result has been determined (unsatisfactory, satisfactory or good), the supervisor submits it to the programme secretariat. This mark is not taken into account in the *Cum Laude* decision, but it is stated on the degree certificate. The completed assessment form is filed together with the placement contract and the placement report by Student Services.

In consultation with the student and the placement organization, it can also be decided before the placement commences that it will only be assessed with a pass/fail. Before entering the assessment result, the administration office will check to see whether the placement contract was approved by the Examination Board and the work plan was submitted.

If the assessment results in a fail, other options enabling the student to obtain the requisite credits will be determined in consultation with the placement supervisor. This could include rewriting the placement report, a substitute assignment, taking an additional course or (as an exception) redoing the entire work placement.