

Finding Work Experience – Information for APS Students

Some general tips

- Work experience is a great way to test out different career ideas to see if you like that sort of work. Equally, graduate recruiters will be impressed if you have previous, relevant work experience. If you aren't sure what you'd like to do after University, read the handout 'Career ideas for students & graduates – Animal & Plant Sciences': www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/careersdegree/aps_careerideas.pdf. Talk it through with a Careers Adviser.
- It may take a while to find relevant work experience. In the meantime, think about other work experience you have. Can it help you develop skills that will be useful in your chosen career? Can you get any type of experience in an organisation relevant to your chosen career, so you gain an insight into how the organisation operates and make contact with people who might help you find more relevant experience?
- Be flexible in terms of the length and type of experience you seek. For example, you may find it necessary to seek several short placements with different organisations in order to gain a good level of experience.
- Be proactive and imaginative in your search for work experience. Don't limit your chances by only looking for publicised opportunities - some organisations may be able to offer work experience but do not advertise individual opportunities, whilst others may not have yet considered offering work experience but might be persuaded if they see a good applicant. Make speculative applications by sending your CV and covering letter to organisations where you'd like to work: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs/creative. Make use of social media such as LinkedIn and Twitter to identify individuals or organisations you might approach: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob/media
- Spread the net as widely as possible. Don't just aim for the larger, well known organisations but also consider work experience with Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs): www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/pdf/sme.pdf. For information about growth sectors across the UK see www.ukbusinesspark.co.uk, www.yorkshiregraduates.co.uk/employment-training, or icould.com/regions.
- Competition is strong for many work experience placements. Ensure your applications for work experience are effective: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob

Work experience in and around the lab

Popular work experience providers include universities and research institutes. As a starting point, talk to your tutor or other lecturers whose research interests you to see if they would be willing and able to offer you a summer placement in their lab and act as your supervisor: www.shef.ac.uk/researchsupervisors/view. They may be able to apply to one of the learned societies or research institutes for a bursary to help fund your placement (check websites of learned societies and research institutions associated with your area of research). Do this early - applications may have to be made in the Nov / Dec in the year before your placement. Also investigate the University's SURE scheme (www.sheffield.ac.uk/sure), On-Campus Placements and other internship schemes (www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs). Other possible sources of work experience include: plant breeders / growers and food producers / manufacturers; agricultural consultancies and policy advisers; Government and other public bodies; charities and trusts; utility companies; chemical and process industries; biotechnology companies; pharmaceutical companies; NHS; animal health and nutrition. Links to the above sectors can be found in the Careers Service handout 'Careers in a Research Environment – Information for Animal & Plant Scientists' (www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/careersdegree/aps_researchcareers.pdf). Specific schemes which are targeted at undergraduates can offer science-related placements, eg www.step.org.uk, www.fledglings.net and www.studentladder.co.uk. Also check out your department's website, email alerts and departmental notice board. The New Scientist Careers Special may be helpful: jobs.newscientist.com/en-gb/landingpage/1401410893/careers-guide-uk. The Royal Society for Biology have a list of some organisations who may be able to help you organise a studentship: www.rsb.org.uk/get-involved/grants/undergraduate-studentships

Make use of online, searchable databases for a wide variety of work experience opportunities suitable for students of any degree discipline, including biosciences. In particular, see the Careers Service's Career Connect via MUSE: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs. Also see targetjobs.co.uk/internships and www.prospects.ac.uk/work_experience.htm



Conservation / environmental work experience

Many APS students aim for a career in conservation. It is very competitive to get into and, alongside a postgraduate qualification, you need to have plenty of volunteering experience in order to improve your chances of getting a paid job. Useful websites to help you start to identify the diverse range of careers in this area, and to find sources of vacancies, include: www.lantra.co.uk; www.conservation-careers.com/conservation-careers-advice; www.ciwem.org/information-and-resources/careers.aspx and www.ieem.net/students-careers. For a good overview of resources, read the Careers Service information sheet 'Environmental and Conservation Careers' www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/pdf/envtconcareers.pdf.

Working with plants or animals in other settings

In addition to research, ecology and conservation, you might look to get experience of working with plants or animals in other settings, for example with plant nurseries, parks gardens and local amenities or in animal welfare or animal behaviour. Further links: www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/careersdegree/aps_careerideas.pdf

Teaching-related work experience

If you are interested in a career in teaching, get as much experience as possible before applying for a PGCE or PGDE, School Direct, TeachFirst or other teacher training. Investigate US in Schools (www.shef.ac.uk/schools/outreach-programmes/us-in-schools/applying) and approach schools speculatively for work shadowing and more hands-on work experience as well as getting involved in after-school clubs, youth groups, summer camps, etc. Local authority websites usually list contact details for schools. Check with your department what opportunities exist for teaching work experience. For general information about teacher training: www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching. For FE: www.feadvice.org.uk and HE: www.prospects.ac.uk/higher_education_lecturer_entry_requirements.htm

Using your science in other ways

You might like to get work experience to try out a variety of careers using your science but outside of a lab environment such as science communication, publishing, journalism or broadcasting. Other areas include scientific sales, administrative roles around clinical trials, the law, policy and campaigning, charity administration, museums or other education officer roles, patent work and bio or information management. For more information and links to useful websites: www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/careersdegree/aps_careerideas.pdf.

Try something a bit different

The majority of graduate jobs (about 60%) are open to people from any academic discipline - your personal skills and qualities are more important than the degree topic you study. Many APS graduates choose to work in roles as diverse as sales, marketing and public relations through to retail, recruitment, human resources, IT, business, finance and management. The 'Prospects' website has sources of useful information about a wide range of career areas: www.prospects.ac.uk/types_of_jobs.htm. Browse all jobs and select one from the list to bring up an occupational profile, which contains a variety of useful links - in particular see 'Employers and vacancy sources'. Also see the 'Targetjobs' website: targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors. In addition, the Careers Service has a range of reference materials and take-away literature about occupations, potential employers you can contact, directories which might help you identify suitable organisations and information about work experience in general. We can also provide one-to-one advice and information about work experience – ask at the Careers Service for details.

Spending your third year working in Industry

As a student in the department of Animal & Plant Sciences you have the opportunity to benefit from taking an industrial placement year as part of your degree, making your course a year longer. A placement year is taken after your penultimate year of study, returning to University to complete your final year. For more information visit: www.shef.ac.uk/placements or talk to Dr Dylan Childs in your department.

Using your experience to enhance your CV

Graduate employers want their new recruits to offer more than a degree alone - they also want evidence of skills and personal attributes. It's a good idea to keep a brief record of the skills you are developing during your experience, with examples of how you have used them. You can then include these examples in applications for future jobs, or refer to them at interview. Investigate initiatives run by the Careers Service to help you make the most of your experience:

Skills for Work Certificate - www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/advice/sfwc

Sheffield Graduate Award - www.shef.ac.uk/thesheffieldgraduateaward

Getting help and support from the Careers Service

Call into the Careers Service on Level 1 of 388 Glossop Road or, for part-time job enquiries, visit the Student Jobshop in the Students' Union. Further information is online at www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/aboutus