



## **Archives and Research Collections**

### **Work Experience Placements Policy**

This policy is framed with reference to the Borthwick [Volunteering Policy](#) (2012, revised 2017 and 2023)

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 Archives and Research Collections is committed to fulfilling the University and Student and Academic Services' strategic objectives, particularly enhancing student experience and employability.

1.2 Archives and Research Collections recognise that such placements add value to our work, tackling tasks and achieving results that could not be tackled or achieved by staff. It aims to equip students with skills and experiences to contribute to their personal and professional development.

1.3 This policy explains the work experience placement programme for staff and prospective work experience placement students, including students undertaking placement opportunities as part of University courses. People volunteering for Archives and Research Collections are dealt with under the [Volunteer Policy](#). There are also paid [internship opportunities](#) via the Careers Service.

#### **2. Purpose of the Policy**

This policy aims to:

- enable work experience placement students and prospective applicants to understand how work placements function within Archives and Research Collections;
- provide a foundation on which our involvement with student work experience placements will be based;
- ensure all applicants and work experience placement students are treated fairly and consistently and receive appropriate guidance before, and support during, their placements.

### **3. Vision for Work Experience Placements**

Archives and Research Collections believes the work experience placement programme should mutually benefit the University and the student. To this end, student work experience placements will:

- become an integral part of the culture of Archives and Research Collections and meet a range of its strategic objectives;
- support University modules and programmes by providing students with tailored opportunities in partnership with module convenors and departments;
- become a key method in the delivery of access projects and public engagement.

### **4. Formal Work Experience Placements Programmes**

4.1 The formal programme is intended to offer short, fixed-term placements to undergraduate and/or postgraduate students at the University of York. Timings and the programmes' duration will depend on staffing capacity within Archives and Research Collections.

4.2 Archives and Research Collections accepts work experience placement students in groups of up to eight at any time. In this way, the projects engage students in teamwork and mutual support and achieve better results.

4.3 Each group of work experience placement students will work on a predefined project, which may involve sorting, listing and digitising items from our collections. A project brief will be designed by Archives and Special Collections staff ahead of each placement opportunity.

4.4 Each group will be supervised by a suitably qualified staff member responsible for coordinating the placement. He or she will be the first point of contact for students on each occasion they attend Archives and Research Collections, although other staff members may be involved with providing guidance and support at any time.

#### 4.5 Induction

The work experience placement coordinator will organise a short, mandatory induction at the beginning of the placement. Students can expect:

- A brief overview of Archives and Research Collections, our history, principal collections and place within Library, Archives and Learning Services and the University;
- An orientation tour of the building and guidance on Health and Safety best practices in our spaces;
- Document handling training (where required) from our archive conservators;
- An Introduction to Data Protection if appropriate to the project being undertaken.
- An introduction to the specific project to be undertaken and a more detailed explanation of student and coordinator responsibilities;

- Contact names and email addresses for relevant staff members.

4.6 Students accepted into the programme will not be paid for the work but will receive appropriate guidance, mentoring, and advice on how best to pursue a career in archives, rare books, or art curation, should they so wish.

#### 4.7 Skills and Experience

Work experience placement students are not expected to have any prior knowledge or experience of working in a specialist collections-based environment. However, they should have a range of skills and interests:

- An interest in our collections and the range of work Archives and Research Collections undertakes to pursue a career in a relevant discipline;
- Ability to work both as part of a team and independently;
- A conscientious, meticulous approach to work, with strong attention to detail.

4.8 Students must adhere to the policies and procedures of the Archives and Research Collections and the University of York.

### **5. Benefits to Archives and Research Collections of accepting work experience placement students**

5.1 There are many benefits to Archives and Research Collections in working with students on work experience placements:

- Students bring a fresh perspective and different and more diverse sets of skills and experiences to our work;
- Students giving their time freely demonstrate that the work we do is of value to the University and the wider community;
- Students contribute to the advancement and, in some cases, completion of tasks that Archives and Research Collections staff could not hope to complete by themselves.

### **6. Benefits to students of work experience in Archives and Research Collections**

- Work experience placements provide useful, practical insights into our work and can be an excellent introduction for those considering training in specialisms such as archives and records management, conservation, rare books librarianship and art curation. Work may include sorting collections in preparation for detailed listing, some basic listing work, digitisation of original material, and outreach work (participating, for example, in workshops helping to prepare exhibitions or writing blogs about the collections).
- Work experience placements can provide an opportunity to be involved with something interesting, absorbing and rewarding for its own sake.
- Work experience placements enable students to work directly with our collections and produce work of long-lasting value to a wide range of people in the UK and abroad, both now and in the future.

## **7. Procedure**

### 7.1 Recruitment

The formal student work experience placements will follow a structured, consistent timetable, which will be widely advertised:

- Work experience opportunities will be advertised via the Borthwick website, the Borthwick Institute and Art Collection Facebook and social media feeds, and Instagram accounts, as well as through the University's Careers Service and targeted emails to relevant academic departments.
- Successful applicants will be informed as soon as possible after the closing date for expressions of interest. Archives and Research Collections staff will have the final say on the applicants' appointment and the group's size.

Course-based work experience placements will be advertised directly by departments in partnership with Archives and Research Collections. Timings for recruitment will vary depending on the needs of modules or courses.

## **8. Data Protection and Confidentiality**

8.1 Archives and Research Collections only ask for information that it really needs for the programme to function effectively; it will keep the information securely, limit access to it and will not pass personal details on without consent unless legally obliged to do so.

8.2 Work experience placements may come into contact with data in the archives that is sensitive or confidential. Occasionally, and for particular projects, it may be necessary to require students to sign our standard Data Protection disclaimer.

8.3 Should work experience placement students come into contact with confidential or sensitive information about Archives and Research Collections, Library, Archives and Learning Services, or the University, they are expected to respect the confidentiality of the information and not disclose the information to third parties.

## **9. Problem-Solving Procedure**

9.1 It is not expected that difficulties will arise, but should they do so, students should speak to their programme coordinator in the first instance. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue openly, fairly and quickly through informal discussion. If this proves impossible, concerns should be expressed in writing to the Keeper of Archives and Research Collections, whose decision will be final. The decision will be communicated within twenty working days.

9.2 If a complaint is received about a student on placement, their programme coordinator will deal with the complaint. The student has the right to be told what the complaint is, state their case, and appeal to the Keeper of Archives and Research Collections. The person who made the complaint should be kept informed.

## 10. Oversight

10.1 Overall responsibility for this policy is with the Keeper of Archives and Research Collections.

10.2 The Archives and Research Collections Leadership Team oversees policy implementation.

### Document history and status

September 2011	Borthwick Senior Management Team	Approved
November 2017	Borthwick Senior Management Team	Updates agreed
January 2024	Archives and Research Collections Leadership Team	Updates agreed

Review cycle 5 years

Date of next review September 2028

# Appendix 1

## Work Experience Placement Agreement

I have received, read and understood the Archives and Research Collections Work Experience Placement Policy, and I agree to abide by that policy and other relevant policies of Archives and Research Collections and the University. I understand that Archives and Research Collections has the right to withdraw my placement.

Name .....

(Please print)

Signature .....

Date .....

# Appendix 2

## Confidentiality Agreement

During your volunteering activity, you may have access to see or hear information of a confidential or personal nature. You are required to maintain confidentiality about information relating to all aspects of your volunteering activity.

Disclosures of information relating to Archive and Research Collection users, members of staff, other volunteers or that you acquire through contact with individuals or records during your volunteering activity may only be disclosed with the prior agreement of your Volunteer Coordinator.

You are reminded that a breach of confidentiality will terminate your volunteering role. Moreover, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 can render an individual liable for prosecution for unauthorised disclosure of personal information or action for civil damages under the same Act.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

I have received, read and understood the Archives and Research Collections Statement of Confidentiality.

Name .....

(Please print)

Signature .....

Date .....