



Is it a placement? Is it volunteering? It's the same thing... right? Not quite!

Undertaking practical experience can provide a helpful taster for students who are considering working within that environment in the future.

This information sheet aims to help students or those working within education to understand the important differences between placements & volunteering, both of which have their role to play in developing work readiness skills. It explains the difference between volunteering (undertaken freely, by choice) and a placement (often associated with educational courses).





'My Tutor told me I need to do a 'volunteering placement'. I'll contact my local Volunteer Centre'

'Volunteering placement' is a misnomer - 'volunteering' and 'placements' are two different things to voluntary and community organisations'.





Here are some key differences...

 Student placement	 Volunteering opportunity
<p>What is a placement?</p> <p>A placement offers the student (most often of health & social care courses) the opportunity to spend a period of specified time with an organisation to gain experience and fulfil the requirements of their course.</p> <p>They may be required to complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS); check prior to the placement.</p>	<p>What is volunteering?</p> <p>The Welsh Government Volunteering Policy (2015) defines volunteering as an activity which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• is undertaken freely, by choice• is undertaken to be of public/ community benefit• is not undertaken for financial gain. <p>Volunteering can be formal or informal. Students wishing to gain experience/ develop their skills are more likely to choose a formal volunteering role. The following information refers to a formal volunteering role.</p>
<p>A student on placement requires the same insurance as a staff member. This is approximately fifteen times more expensive than for a volunteer.</p>	<p>Insurance for a volunteer costs the organisation less. It does not cover all activities that staff insurance covers.</p>
<p>A placement contract would set out what experience will be offered to the student (e.g. shadowing and set learning opportunities/objectives).</p>	<p>No formal contract for volunteering. Rather a recruitment pathway such as interview, induction training, etc. There may be a volunteer agreement in some charities but the relationship between a volunteer and organisation is not contractual.</p>







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<p>Placement learning needs should be identified by the student & the facilitator (a designated staff member within the host organisation) and the external assessor comments on how these will be met.</p>	<p>The volunteer receives specific training identified in order to carry out the role, as identified in the role description (e.g. safeguarding, boundary setting).</p>
<p>Expectations of the placement opportunity (e.g. practicalities, such as the number of hours).</p> <p>Students are expected to attend practice learning during the usual business hours of the organisation.</p>	<p>No formal commitment. The organisation usually gives an idea of the desired level of volunteer involvement (e.g. 2-3 hours per week).</p> <p>At this stage, the volunteer may be asked to complete a DBS check</p>
<p>Formal arrangements for induction, including Health & Safety training, organisational Policies & Procedures, etc. are required for placement paperwork.</p>	<p>Volunteers should be informed about how to keep themselves safe whilst volunteering (e.g. not sharing their personal details with those they support. Volunteer managers should also undertake risk assessments).</p>
<p>Any additional needs/requirements should be identified, agreed and recorded before the commencement of the placement. The student, the facilitator (a designated staff member within the host organisation) and the external assessor must be aware of these and agree to the arrangements (e.g. arranging reasonable adjustments for disabled students or those with caring responsibilities).</p>	<p>Best practice volunteer opportunities should initiate discussions around any additional needs/requirements.</p> <p>Support enables the volunteer to access volunteering in a way that suits them best. However, potential volunteers can discuss their support needs if it hasn't been brought up.</p>





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<p>Student, facilitator (a designated staff member within the host organisation) and external assessor agree to the expectations of the placement.</p>	<p>Regular supervision check-ins should be arranged to ensure the volunteer is happy in their role. These could be formal or informal, and one-to-one or group sessions.</p>
<p>Facilitator (a staff member within the host organisation) and external assessor will need to liaise with each other to write a report on the student's performance during their placement.</p>	<p>The organisation can usually provide volunteers with a reference, stating the nature of the role, number of hours, skills demonstrated, etc.</p>





In summary, a placement which is required as part of an educational course places this experience outside of the definition of volunteering, as it is NOT undertaken by choice.

A placement will require an organisation to assess your time with them and complete your course related paperwork. This will be a different way of managing you than their volunteer base and both experiences cost an organisation, but certain costs maybe more expensive for a placement, e.g. insurance. You should speak to your course tutor about organisations they have developed a relationship with who have supported previous students - you should not ordinarily be required to organise your own placement. Some organisations have developed relationships with educational establishments and have developed expertise in supporting students.

Volunteering, however, is a brilliant way of supporting your learning and gaining further experience, which will be as useful to you as it is to the organisation.

Most organisations that offer quality volunteering opportunities have dedicated volunteer management staff who have developed skills in this area through training and experience. They will be able to help with your recruitment, induction and support you to enjoy the role and will usually reimburse your out of pocket expenses. Volunteering can lead to developing amazing skills and gaining a reference to help further your career.

Contact your local CVS, who have volunteer centre teams who can help you further:

Swansea CVS
01792 544000
www.scvs.org.uk

Neath Port Talbot CVS
01639 631246
www.nptcvs.wales



West Glamorgan Volunteering Support is a multi-agency project creating shared resources to develop the knowledge, management and coordination of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations across the Swansea and Neath Port Talbot areas. It has been funded through the Welsh Government Volunteering Recovery Fund.

The project partners are:

Neath Port Talbot Council, Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service, Swansea Bay University Health Board, Swansea Council, Swansea Council for Voluntary Service and West Glamorgan Regional Partnership.

For more information visit:

www.westglamorgan.org.uk/wgvs

