

**CAREERS**



University of  
Reading



# PROFESSIONAL PLACEMENT YEAR HANDBOOK

**PLACEMENTS  
— WORK —**



# CONTENT

Click on the titles below to jump straight to that page.

- Introduction
- PPY encyclopaedia
- The road to a Professional Placement Year
- Finding a Professional Placement Year
- Receiving an offer
- Money
- Accommodation
- Placements abroad
- Tier 4 visa holders
- Your wellbeing & urgent medical support
- Health & safety in the workplace
- Equality, diversity & discrimination
- Disclosing a disability and reasonable adjustments
- Professional behaviour
- Placement year check-in
- Facing challenges during your PPY
- Returning from your Professional Placement Year
- Placement FAQs
- Placement checklists
- Resources & useful contacts







# HELLO

We're Alice and Kobi. After completing our placement year, we returned as Professional Placement Year (PPY) Ambassadors and have spent the year working with Part 1 and Part 2 students helping them on their journey to secure a placement year. We've worked with the Placements Team to put together this handbook with information that we think you'll find useful during your placement journey.

It's really exciting that you're thinking of doing a placement year, or that you've already got an offer. A placement year is a really valuable opportunity to boost skills, put your degree into practice and improve your commercial awareness. The placement year has also really benefitted our final year studies,

we're far more efficient and organised now that we're used to the 9-5 day.

This handbook will outline the journey and preparation to achieving your goal of a placement year: undertaking training, sorting CVs and covering letters, the placement search, interviews and assessment centres. Once you've accepted a placement it provides information on accommodation, finances, health and safety and other professional guidance.

The Placements Team is here to help you throughout your journey, and the PPY Ambassadors can provide support through their personal experiences of doing a placement year.

## Disclaimer:

Please note that Schools/Departments may have different or additional arrangements in place for the Professional Placement Year than what has been set out in this handbook. It is important that you consult with your Placement Coordinator and/or Tutor to receive School/Department specific information.

# PPY ENCYCLOPAEDIA

Use this handy guide to familiarise yourself with the various placement related terminology used in this handbook.

<b>CAREERS CONSULTANT</b>	Careers Consultants can support you with identifying what you might want to do during your placement year and help you reflect on your strengths and values to help you narrow down your options.
<b>CAREER EVENTS AND TRAINING</b>	Sessions arranged by the central Careers Team, many of these are led by employers and some by the Placements Team.
<b>CAREERS &amp; PLACEMENT FAIRS</b>	Arranged both centrally and within some schools. Attend as many as you can to network and find out about the opportunities you have.
<b>CENTRAL PPY EVENTS</b>	Events held throughout the year to support your development and allow you to meet students from all over the University.
<b>INDUCTION CHECKLIST</b>	This checklist ensures that you know potentially lifesaving information such as the location of fire exits and how to contact a first aider, to where you can make yourself a cuppa and where the loos are. It is compulsory for all students.
<b>INTERNSHIP</b>	At the University of Reading we tend to refer to an internship as an extracurricular period of work experience. These are often completed over the summer, however shorter term-time or part-time options are often available too. Even though Internships are not credit-bearing they are a great opportunity to build your skills and employability.
<b>PLACEMENT COORDINATOR</b>	Supports you throughout your journey by providing training sessions, 1:1 appointments, mock interviews and ensuring all your paperwork is in place.
<b>PLACEMENT TUTOR</b>	Responsible for the academic component of the Professional Placement Year and will also be there to support you while you are out on placement.

<b>PLACEMENT CHECK-IN</b>	During your placement year you may be visited by a member of staff, or invited to a Skype call, so that the University remains in touch and available for any questions you may have.
<b>PPY</b>	Abbreviation of Professional Placement Year.
<b>PPY BOOT CAMP</b>	Our PPY Boot Camps are our flagship events and is a day full of training, food and networking to help you realise your goal of doing a placement year.
<b>PPY ONLINE TRAINING</b>	All PPY students have 24/7 access to a suite of online training sessions on Blackboard. These sessions are an integral part of your PPY training and will help you succeed with your goal of completing a placement year.
<b>PPY STUDENT AMBASSADOR</b>	Students who have returned from their placement year and are now back to encourage students to complete a placement year. They will support you on your journey by sharing their insights, knowledge and experiences gained from their placement journey.
<b>PPY TRAINING SESSIONS</b>	The training sessions are an essential part of your Professional Placement Year journey and not only provides you with the skills to feel confident about recruitment processes but also allows you to get to know other students in your School/Department who are also working towards a placement year.
<b>PROFESSIONAL PLACEMENT YEAR</b>	The Professional Placement Year is also known as 'industrial training', 'year of professional experience', 'industrial year', 'year in industry', 'professional training', 'professional placement' and 'placement year'. They all refer to the same thing i.e. completing a year of work as part of your degree.
<b>STUDENT RISK ASSESSMENT</b>	All students completing a credit-bearing placement must complete a risk assessment that is signed off by your Placement Tutor/Coordinator.

# THE ROAD TO A PROFESSIONAL PLACEMENT YEAR

Each year around 300 students at the University set off on a Professional Placement Year to gain a year's worth of professional/graduate level work.

Most of our undergraduate degrees offer the option of a Professional Placement Year. If you're unsure please speak with your Student Support Coordinator, Academic Tutor or email [placements@reading.ac.uk](mailto:placements@reading.ac.uk)

Students choose to undertake a placement year for a wide range of reasons, but whatever the reason, all students stand to gain a lot from a year of professional work.

“I wanted to complete a placement year to make me more employable for when I left university. I had heard it would help me grow in confidence and learn both professional and technical skills, which are invaluable for the future.”

**Olivia Jump**

BSc Consumer Behaviour and Marketing  
PPY at Waitrose & Partners 2017/2018



Spread your wings and explore the world of work – be adventurous!



A placement will build your confidence, skillset and professional network.



Can improve your academic performance: students who have completed a placement are more likely to achieve a 2:1.<sup>1</sup>



Will help you contextualise your learning and put your knowledge into practice.



A competitive graduate market where employers are looking for both knowledge and experience – a placement will give you the edge.



60% of students who do a placement year are offered a full-time job.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>ASET – the Work Based and Placement Learning Association

<sup>2</sup>Rate My Placement

# PPY PREPARATION AND TRAINING

Securing a placement year is a competitive process but if you start preparing early, and make use of the support on offer, you are much more likely to succeed with your applications and fulfil your ambition of completing a placement year.

The PPY Training Programme starts in part 1 of your degree, all the way through to the end of part 2. Don't worry however if you're in your second year and have recently decided that you'd like to complete a PPY. The programme is flexible to allow students to join at any time.

**“I wanted practical experience in my field of study, which I didn't have the opportunity to do before my degree, and now I have a whole year's worth before I've even graduated. I really wanted to push myself out of my comfort zone and get a genuine idea of what the working world might be like.”**

**Eleni Charalambous**

BSc Information Technology  
PPY at Enterprise Rent-A-Car 2017/2018



## School Based Sessions

These sessions are facilitated by your Placement Coordinator to provide information about PPYs in your School or Department and help ensure that you feel confident and prepared for the PPY recruitment process.



## PPY Online Training Blackboard

The online training enables you to build your recruitment skills when and where it suits you. The online sessions complement the school based sessions to allow you to gain as much as possible from the face-to-face sessions.



## PPY Events

The PPY events are key events for any placement interested student. The main event during the year are our PPY Boot Camps which provide a full day of training and networking to motivate you and equip you for securing your placement year.

We run boot camps for both part 1 and part 2 students.

Please note that some Schools and Departments do not have a designated Placement Coordinator. Students do however always have access to a Careers Consultant, central careers sessions and PPY Online Training and Events.



# PPY TRAINING JOURNEY

This timeline provides an overview of the essential PPY training that we provide to students, either in their Schools or through a central session.

We use a blended learning approach which means that some sessions are completed online, and others run as face-to-face sessions.

“Start the application process early. Make sure you take advantage of all the help offered by the university and get comfortable with the application process. Find some roles you think you would really enjoy and focus on those rather than making too many applications which may overwhelm you. On placement, push yourself to take on opportunities you normally wouldn't, and remember to enjoy yourself and meet lots of people who could end up becoming valuable contacts and friends for life!”

Eleni Charalambous

BSc Information Technology  
PPY at Enterprise Rent-A-Car 2017/2018

## Part 1 Autumn

### Placements: An Introduction

Find out how placements work in your school/dep

### What Placements Can I do?

Online session, complete during Autumn term Part 1

### Placement Search

Face-to-face session in your school/dep

### Applications

Online session, complete before the end of Part 1

## Part 2 Autumn

### Interview Skills

Face-to-face session in your school/dep

# PPY Training Journey

### Approaching Placements with Confidence

Face-to-face session in your school/dep

## Part 1 Spring

### What Placements Can I Do (2)?

Face-to-face session in your school/dep

### CVs

Cover Letters  
Online session, complete before the end of Part 1

### Interviews: Getting started

Online session, complete before the end of Part 1

## Part 2 Spring/Summer

### Pre-Placement Session

Face-to-face session in your school/dep

Have a great placement year!



# WHEN DO EMPLOYERS RECRUIT?

It is difficult to provide an exact time of year when employers will recruit for placement year students as this depends on the type and size of company, the industry they operate within and market fluctuations which impact on productivity levels.

Here we've provided a typical timeline for a large organisation and a smaller company. Please note that the different stages are fluid, cross over into each other and will shift depending on when you apply.

\*refers to part 2

TYPICAL PPY RECRUITMENT  
CYCLE FOR LARGE COMPANIES\*

Application deadlines advertised and online application portals open	AUG - NOV
First stage selection: online tests, video/phone interview	SEP - JAN
Second & third stage selection: assessment centre, final interview	NOV - APRIL
Offers issued to students	DEC - MAY
Your placement year starts	JULY - SEP

TYPICAL PPY RECRUITMENT  
CYCLE FOR SMALLER COMPANIES

Application deadlines advertised and online application portals open	NOV - JUNE
First stage selection: Skype/phone interview	NOV - JUNE
Second stage selection: Interview	JAN - JULY
Offers issued to students	JAN - AUG
Your placement year starts	JULY - SEP





# BUILD YOUR SKILLS

When reviewing your application, employers will not only look for evidence of your technical skills and academic knowledge: they will also expect to see evidence of your professional skills (e.g. teamwork, problem solving, and communication skills).

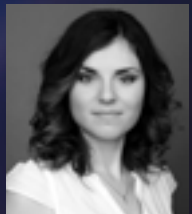
Having experience from beyond your degree will provide you with more examples to use in interviews to really show the employer that you are the right candidate for the job!

Start building your skills and your CV as soon as possible by making the most of University life.

- **Paid and volunteer work is highly valued by employers** regardless of sector and industry – it's all about the transferrable skills.
- **Get involved in extracurricular activities such as clubs, societies and teams.** Put yourself forward for being President, Secretary or Treasurer and develop your leadership and organisation skills further.
- **Focusing on your academic work in part 1 and 2 will maximise your possibilities.** Some companies will require a 2:1 (based on your part 1 results), however there are plenty that don't set specific grade requirements.



**Top Tip:** Check out the  
*Reading Internship Scheme*



“Apply to as many opportunities as possible but only commit if you can see yourself working in that specific role. Don't give up if you don't get your dream role, there will be so many other great ones out there!”

**Anika Basler**

BSc Psychology  
PPY at Siemens

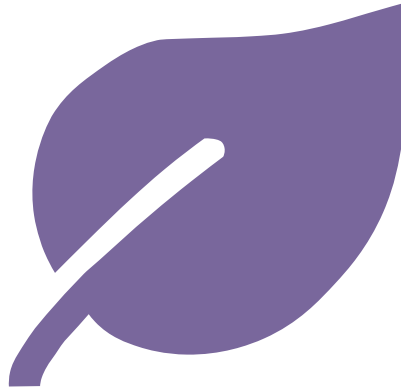
# KEEP ON TRACK: PART 1



“The piece of advice that I would give someone is to push yourself out of your comfort zone. Thinking about placements can be daunting however, I have never spoken to a student who has regretted taking a year out. Make the most of the experience by getting involved in everything - you'll make some great friends along the way!”

**Olivia Jump**

BSc Consumer Behaviour and Marketing  
PPY at Waitrose & Partners 2017/2018



## AUTUMN TERM

- Meet up with your Placement Coordinator/ Tutor.
- Attend the **Careers and Placements Fair** in October and start growing your network!
- Complete the PPY Online Training sessions and attend your school based workshops.
- If you're looking for a **part-time job**, check out **Campus Jobs**.
- Sign up to the **RED Award**.



## SPRING TERM

- Continue to attend **Placement/Career Events and Training** – look out for our PPY Boot Camp!
- Start thinking about how you can make the most out of your summer! An **internship** is a great way to gain professional skills and will help prepare you for your Professional Placement Year.
- Apply to attend insight days for first year students and explore a company/ industry in more detail.



## SUMMER TERM

- Check out the **Life Tools** talks to learn practical skills to help you achieve your potential.
- Once exams are over it's time to celebrate and start to **explore options** for your placement year.
- **Be inspired** by some of our previous placement year students.
- Make sure your CV is updated and your LinkedIn profile polished. Book a 1:1 appointment to get some feedback before you leave for the summer.



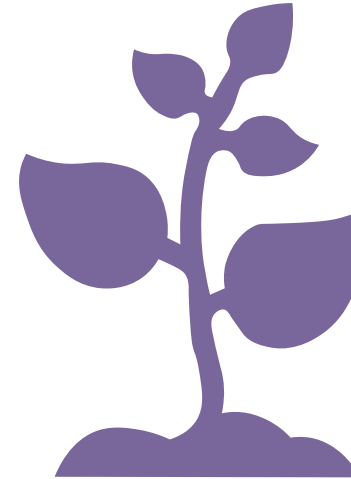
# KEEP ON TRACK: PART 2

Companies and organisations start recruiting as early as August/September so do keep track of early application deadlines. This year will test your planning skills as you will be juggling PPY applications and interviews with your studies and other activities/part-time work. If you need help managing your time effectively, check out the **online guide** from Study Advice, speak to your Placement Coordinator/Tutor or the Careers team.



## AUTUMN TERM

- **Meet up with your Placement Coordinator/Tutor** and discuss your placement year plans.
- Attend the **Careers and Placements Fair** and make yourself known to any companies that you have applied to or are interested in. Dress smartly, smile and show them what a great addition you would be!
- Keep an eye out for the PPY Boot Camp and make sure you attend so that you are fully prepared for the 'PPY hunt'.



## SPRING TERM

- **Check in with your Placement Coordinator/Tutor** – they are there to support you!
- **Keep a log of your applications** to date and reflect on any feedback you have received.
- If you need a refresher on good interview practice, how to succeed in assessment centres or need a CV update, have a look for any schoolbased or **central Careers run training sessions**.



## SUMMER TERM

Once you've finished your exams and coursework, you'll be heading off on your Professional Placement Year.

**Have a fantastic year and remember to stay in touch.**



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**Top Tip: *EmployAbility*** is a great resource for students with a disability. Their website provides a wealth of advice as well as placement opportunities - keep an eye out for these PPYs as they often have early application deadlines!

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# FINDING A PROFESSIONAL PLACEMENT YEAR

As a placement year student, you are responsible for finding your placement, but the Careers team will be with you every step of the way and there is lots of support available.

As previously mentioned, you have access to a specific Professional Placement Year training programme, in addition to the wide range of sessions and events provided by the Careers team. The Careers website is also full of useful information and further links to help you explore your options.

On the next page we've provided an overview of the main resources, however there are lots more out there so do speak with your Placement Coordinator or Careers Consultant for further guidance.

**Find out more about the Professional Placement Year and listen to former students talk about their placement experience to inspire and motivate you.**

## CAREER/ PLACEMENT DIRECTION ADVICE

**Explore Your Options** and **Prospects** provide information about your degree and possible career directions, Use the career planner/quiz identify roles that might suit you and explore the **job profiles** to gain insight into roles to help you make informed decisions about placement areas that interest you.





# WHERE TO FIND PLACEMENT YEAR OPPORTUNITIES

There are lots of websites available where employers advertise their PPY roles, have a look at the below ones to start you off.

The websites below allow you to create an account and set your preferences/job interests so that you can receive targeted emails with opportunities in line with your preferences. Don't forget to also have a look at company websites.

- **MyJobsOnline**
- **Rate My Placement**
- **Target Jobs**
- **Milkround**
- **Gradcracker**
- **LinkedIn Jobs**
- **Glassdoor**
- **Indeed**
- **EmployAbility**  
(opportunities specifically for disabled and dyslexic students)



“GO FOR IT! If you want to do a placement year, then don't give up during the application process. Don't be put off by taking a year out of your degree because it is so worth it, and really helps you to understand what jobs you do and don't like. Have an open mind during the application process, apply for smaller companies or ask if companies would consider having a placement student. Doing a PPY really helps you for final year, you come back more efficient with a great work ethic.”

**Alice Nield**

BSc Food Science  
PPY at Mondelēz International 2017/2018



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**Top Tip:** Make sure you register your interest for opportunities soon-to-be advertised on Rate My Placement and receive a reminder when the PPY opportunities go live.

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## INTERESTED IN WORKING ABROAD?

**GoinGlobal & Prospects** provide vacancies as well as invaluable advice about working culture in a wide range of countries. We always encourage students to spread their wings and explore options overseas, if this is your dream.



# NETWORKING YOUR WAY TO A PPY

There are often more unadvertised placement year opportunities than advertised ones, especially with smaller companies!

Many organisations are willing to consider taking a placement year student, but don't advertise the vacancy. This means that proactive students who contact organisations speculatively can end up with a fantastic opportunity.

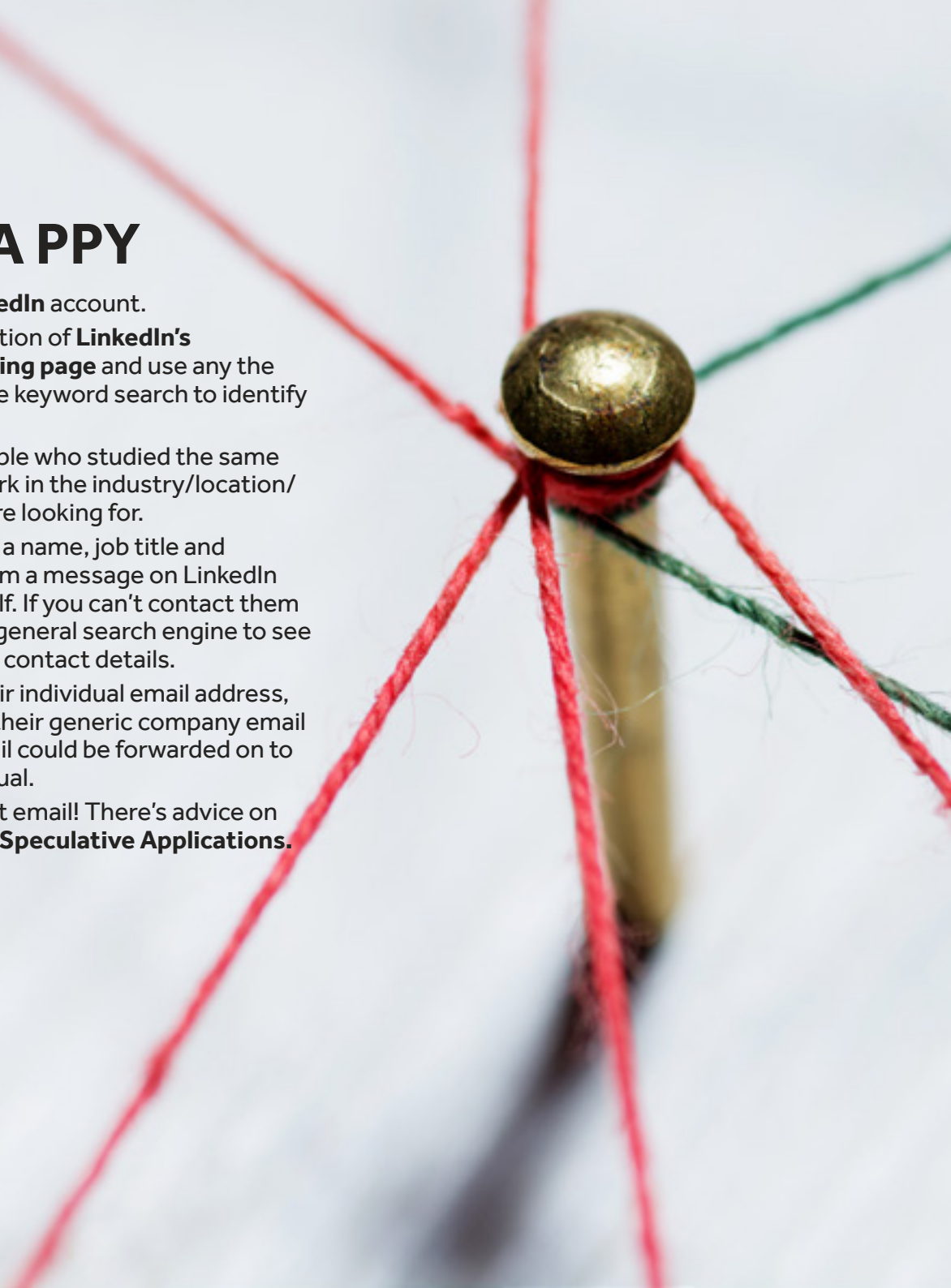
- First, research people to approach:
  - Make a list of 10 organisations you'd love to work for, that don't have any placements advertised on their website. Use their website to identify a suitable contact (either HR or the manager of the team you'd like to work in).
  - Search for Reading alumni who work in relevant areas (sometimes it's easier to contact someone you have something in common with).
- Set up a basic **LinkedIn** account.
- Use the alumni section of **LinkedIn's University of Reading page** and use any the six filters and/or the keyword search to identify individuals.
- Try looking for people who studied the same subject, or who work in the industry/location/skill-area that you're looking for.
- Once you've found a name, job title and company, send them a message on LinkedIn introducing yourself. If you can't contact them via LinkedIn, use a general search engine to see if you can find their contact details.
- If you can't find their individual email address, you could write to their generic company email and ask if your email could be forwarded on to that named individual.
- Finally, write a great email! There's advice on this in our guide to **Speculative Applications**.



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**Top Tip:** Check out the PPY Peer-to Peer Support on the PPY Training Organisation on **Blackboard** In addition to being inspired by where previous students have gone, you can also contact our friendly peer supporters for advice and company insights.

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## APPLICATIONS & CVS

You will find plenty of application advice in the **Compete for Success** section and complete application focused PPY Online Training sessions on Blackboard.

**Psychometric tests** are used by many companies and across all sectors. The tests are used by employers mainly to shortlist a large number of candidates to more manageable numbers, therefore it's important that you practice, practice and practice to make sure you make it to the next round.

To help you prepare you have access to free practice tests on **Graduates First**.



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*Keep your CV and LinkedIn profile up-to-date so that it is application ready (obviously you will need to tailor your CV to the job before submitting it, but it'll be quicker and easier).*

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## INTERVIEWS

The great majority of placement year students will have to attend a formal interview.

By following the PPY training programme you will be well prepared. Don't forget that you can arrange a mock interview with your Placement Coordinator or Careers Consultant. Further advice is available on the '**Compete**' section of Careers website.

**Assessment Centres** are used by mainly large organisation and allows the employer to assess the candidates in a real-life situation. They also provide excellent insight to candidates on what working life in that role might look like. They are a common part of the recruitment process so do your research so that you understand what usually happens during the day and how you can put your best foot forward in the exercises will help you feel confident. Read more about assessment centres **here** and do keep an eye out for and attend any employer led mock assessment centres that are arranged by Careers during the year.



“If you are not sure whether you want to do a Professional Placement Year, you can talk to one of the PPY Ambassadors as we were in your position once. Think about how one year of experience will benefit your future career and what type of job you'd like to do. Try not to worry too much about application processes as there are many people here to help you! A Placement Year is a very exciting part of your degree and a great addition to your CV.”

**Gaia De Angelis**

MChem Chemistry  
PPY at CEM Analytical Services 2017/2018

# RECEIVING AN OFFER

## CONGRATULATIONS ON RECEIVING AN OFFER (OR OFFERS)!

If you have accepted an offer (verbally or in writing) you should now stop applying for positions and contact any companies where you have a pending application to withdraw it.

Every year we have students who accept an offer for a placement year but keep applying to other companies in the hope of finding something 'better'. If they find something that they believe is better, they accept that offer and cancel the initially received offer (also known as reneging on an offer).

Not only is this highly unprofessional behaviour and causes issues for the employer who now has a vacancy to fill, it may also negatively impact upon the University's reputation and make it more difficult for future students to secure a placement year.

Of course, there are exceptions, for example if you are relocating for your placement year and you now need to be close to home due to illness or caring for a family member. In an instance like this, it would be understandable to contact the employer and withdraw your acceptance.



“One of the best times on placement was when I was trusted with leading important projects, which meant that I created an online learning platform and piloted a coaching workshop. It was incredible to see how much I grew from those challenges! ”

**Anika Basler**

BSc Psychology  
PPY at Siemens



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**Top Tip:** *Manage your digital profile to make sure you are projecting a professional image to prospective employers*

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# MONEY

## TUITION FEES AND MAINTENANCE LOANS

During your Professional Placement Year, you will pay a reduced tuition fee which is 15% of your usual fees. UK and EU students can apply for a tuition fee loan to cover the cost.

UK students can also apply for a reduced maintenance loan. Students who are doing placements that are classed as unpaid (note: only unpaid placements in certain sectors and institutions will be classed as unpaid) may be eligible to apply for a full maintenance loan. Visit the **Money Matters** page, contact the **Student Financial Support** team or your Student Finance Authority for more information.

## BURSARIES FROM THE UNIVERSITY

The University offers a **Placement Bursary** of up to £1,000 to eligible UK and EU students who are doing a credit-bearing placement.

Check out the guidance notes for full information and eligibility criteria. Don't miss the opportunity - remember to apply before or while you are on placement!

Students who are eligible for the Reading Bursary will receive fee waivers and cash bursaries in proportion to the percentage of tuition fee they are charged for the placement year.

## SALARY AND TAXES

If you are earning a salary you will most likely be paying **Income Tax** and **National Insurance**.

If you have a P45 from a previous job, remember to give this to your placement employer when you start.



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**Top Tip:** For more financial tips,  
check out *Blackbullion*

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# ACCOMMODATION

## ACCOMMODATION DURING YOUR PLACEMENT YEAR

If you are moving away for your placement year you will need to think about arranging accommodation for the year. Your employer may be able to provide advice on good areas to live and/or a reputable letting agent. Organisations with a large number of placement students might help to facilitate house shares through social media contact groups or networking/meet-and-greet events.

## ACCOMMODATION FOR WHEN YOU RETURN

We know that students sometimes worry about accommodation for when they return to University: We provide a small number of rooms in halls accommodation for students returning from a placement. You will be invited to submit an Expression of Interest for a room in halls during the autumn term of your placement year – keep an eye out for the email! Following this the Accommodation Team will contact you with further details on how to make an application.

More information about Accommodation is available **here** and from **RUSU**.



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**Top Tip:** *Speak with family and friends who might be familiar with the area: perhaps they can offer temporary accommodation?*

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# PLACEMENTS ABROAD

You have the option of working abroad during your placement year. As you are fully supported by the University this could be an excellent opportunity to really broaden your horizons and spread your wings.

Before you leave for your placement year you will complete a thorough risk assessment with your Placement Coordinator/Tutor, and you will have regular contact with your Placement Coordinator/Tutor whilst abroad.

While you are on your placement year abroad you are covered by RSA travel/emergency medical insurance. To ensure your insurance cover you must complete the Student Risk Management Form, accessible on **RISIS**, as soon as you have confirmed your travel arrangements.

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**If you need help, or wish to make a claim, contact RSA's 24/7 emergency medical and travel assistance helpline.**

Phone: **+44 (0) 2086 084 100**

Email: **[rsa@healix.com](mailto:rsa@healix.com)**

University's RSA policy number:

**RTT 306251/LUPC35**

**Contact the University's Insurance Office if you have any questions:**

Phone: **+44 (0) 118 378 8309**

Email: **[insurance@reading.ac.uk](mailto:insurance@reading.ac.uk)**

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# TIER 4 VISA HOLDERS

During your Professional Placement Year, the University of Reading will continue to sponsor your Tier 4 visa.

This means that the University has an obligation to report your placement details to the Home Office and to continue our engagement monitoring while you are on your placement year.

As you are not attending lectures this will be done by a monthly email sent to your University email account – please ensure that you check your university email regularly and reply to any monitoring emails without delay.

Before you start your placement, you will be required to sign the Work Placements Agreement for Tier 4 Student.

Visit **#WeAreInternational** or email **[immigration@reading.ac.uk](mailto:immigration@reading.ac.uk)** for more information.





# YOUR WELLBEING

If you become unwell whilst on your placement year you should follow your employer's process for reporting sickness or absence (this should be covered as part of your induction). If you are off work for more than a week you are also required to inform your Placement Coordinator/Tutor.

If you have any concerns about your mental health, it's important that you reach out and speak with someone, for example your GP. Remember that it is ok to not be ok and you shouldn't be afraid of speaking with your manager about any physical or mental health issues that you are experiencing.

Throughout your career at the University of Reading you can access a range of support. We encourage you to seek advice and guidance as soon as you can and to enable this, we have a few options. **The Life Tools programme** will assist you in developing resilience skills in a variety of areas from presentation preparation to more self-awareness. We know you may not be able to physically attend so we also have a blog you can view when you have the time outside of your placement schedule.

All students have access to a free resource which is available 24/7, **The Big White Wall**. The online forum includes art therapy, specific therapeutic course to help manage and understand a variety of difficulties as well as an open forum where others can support you.

During your placement year you can still use the **University's Counselling & Wellbeing** services and your employer may also offer counselling support through their Employee Assistance Programme, as part of their wellbeing package.

The life of a student is rather different from the life of an employee: you are now expected to maintain focus and productivity across the duration of the working day and have little say in when and where you complete your work.

Transitioning into a placement year does take time and it's completely natural to feel a bit lost with your new routine. If you get the basics right, i.e. eat and sleep well and have a good work/life balance, you are likely to find the change easier. If you are struggling it might be helpful to speak with a friend or fellow student also doing a placement year and of course you can always reach out to your Placement Coordinator/Tutor for support.

You can find contact details for the University's Counselling & Wellbeing services and other external support services at the back of this handbook.

For tips on looking after yourself, visit:  
**[www.reading.ac.uk/looking-after-yourself](http://www.reading.ac.uk/looking-after-yourself)**

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## Urgent medical support

In an emergency, call 999 or go to the nearest Accident & Emergency department.

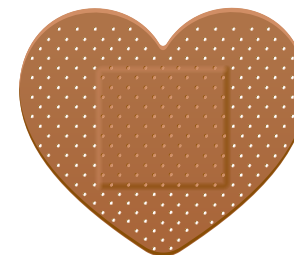
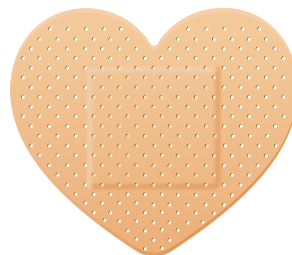
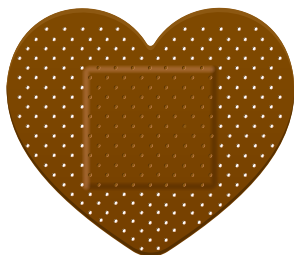
For urgent 24/7 mental health support call **NHS Mental Health Crisis Team** (Berkshire) on **0300 365 0300** or the **Samaritans** on **116 123**.

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“Be confident in your abilities and don't let the fear of the unknown put you off. Even if you are not sure what you want to go into in the future, a year is a good time frame to trial something new and at the same end you will have a set of invaluable skills to enhance your future career in any career.”

**Lucy Brazier**

BSc Geography (Human & Physical)  
PPY at Fisher German LLP 2017/2018



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**Top Tip:** Remember to register with a local GP if you have moved away from Reading/your hometown.

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# HEALTH & SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

We want all our students to stay healthy and safe during their placement year which is why we complete a risk assessment for every student undertaking a placement year. The health and safety arrangements will depend on whether you are traipsing through the jungle or spending most of your time in an office.

All students should be aware of their employer's health and safety policy and must report any concerns and incidents to their line manager and their Placement Coordinator/Tutor.

On your first day on placement you should complete the Health and Safety Induction Checklist together with your line manager/H&S representative and return this without delay to your Placement Coordinator/Tutor. Following the induction, you should:

- Know how to raise the fire alarm and what the alarm sounds like
- Know where the emergency exits are and where the assembly points are located
- If you have reduced mobility or other difficulties that will impact on your ability to evacuate during an emergency, you should know where the refuge spaces are and have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) in place
- Have access to appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) if your work calls for this

More information on health and safety is available from the **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)**.





# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & DISCRIMINATION

Equality, diversity and discrimination are important issues that the University takes very seriously. During your placement year you have the right to an equal workplace, free from discrimination and harassment.

Discrimination and harassment can take many forms, including:

- Sexual harassment
- Racial harassment
- Homophobic remarks
- Comments about disabilities
- Comments about religious beliefs

If you encounter any kind of discrimination whilst on your placement, let your Placement Coordinator or Placement Tutor know immediately. Do not assume that you cannot do anything about it - the University is here to support you.



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**Top Tip:** For more information about disability and inclusivity, please visit our [webpage](#).

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# DISCLOSING A DISABILITY AND REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

If you have a disability we would encourage you to disclose this to an employer if you feel it is relevant to do so and you are comfortable with sharing this information.

Once you have disclosed a disability the employer is legally obligated to make reasonable adjustments for you and provide support so that you are not disadvantaged during a recruitment process or once in the job.

Students might choose to disclose a disability at several different points, though this may vary depending on the job. Remember that the choice is yours!

- At the application stage (if completing an online application form many companies will ask for this information, but you are not obligated to provide it)
- Before a particular stage in a recruitment process, e.g. interview
- When you receive a job offer
- Once you have started the job

Students with physical or mental health conditions which are not considered to be a disability may also be entitled to reasonable adjustments, examples include:

- Providing a suitable chair for employees with chronic back problems
- Supporting employees with mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression by doing things differently e.g. providing a personal desk space rather than hot-desking

Please do not hesitate to speak with your Placement Coordinator/Tutor if you have any concerns – we are here to help. You can also receive support from the University's **Disability Advisory Service** and there is a wealth of information (and jobs!) available from **EmployAbility**.



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**Top Tip:** Companies shouldn't ask what the disability is, they should only ask what adjustments might be necessary as every individual has different needs.

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# BEING A PROFESSIONAL

## **BUILD YOUR BRAND**

On your placement year you are an ambassador for yourself and for the University: how you act will influence how you are perceived by colleagues. Exhibiting professional behaviours and respecting your employer's culture and values, will go a long way towards building your professional brand. Make sure you are known for all the right reasons!

## **ABSENCE AND APPOINTMENTS**

If you are unwell make sure you contact your line manager as soon as possible, if you are off work for longer than 1 week, please notify your Placement Coordinator/Tutor. If you need to attend a doctor/dentist appointment, please ensure you notify your line manager as soon as possible. Don't just turn up late or leave early.

## **ANNUAL LEAVE**

If you wish to arrange time off work, please make sure you follow company policy and give the appropriate notice to your supervisor.

## **COMMUNICATING**

Think about how you speak with your colleagues and supervisor. Using the same language as you do when speaking with friends is usually not suitable.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Respect confidentiality at all times, be discreet and make sure that you are not sharing sensitive information with friends, family or in any public domain.

## **APPROPRIATE WORKWEAR**

This will depend on the type of placement year you are doing; in an office you are generally expected to wear formal or casual business wear while on an excavation site this would not be appropriate.

## **TIME MANAGEMENT**

Be punctual and meet any deadlines set for you. This also includes effective organisation of your work, the ability to prioritise and multitask.

## **ASK FOR HELP**

Ask questions and seek clarification if you don't understand a task you've been given. Be honest about your capacity, knowledge and experience. If you make a mistake – admit it rather than try to cover it up. Remember that placements are about gaining experience and developing your skills, making mistakes is something everyone does, the important thing is to learn from them.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

With social media being part of everyday life, it is more important than ever that you think before you post anything relating to your placement year. Do not gossip or complain about colleagues or work in general on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram etc. It is extremely unprofessional and serves no purpose. Refrain from taking photos in the workplace to make sure that you do not unintentionally share confidential information.

## **EMAIL ETIQUETTE**

Make sure that you read your emails carefully before sending and avoid using 'text speak' or non-standardised abbreviations. Do not send/forward jokes or chain emails and do not discuss/gossip about colleagues over email.

## **INTERNET AND PHONE USE**

Make sure you follow your employer's policy on acceptable personal use of work computers/internet and the use of mobile phones in the workplace.

## **OFFICE POLITICS**

Avoid gossiping about your colleagues and passing moral judgement on political, religious or other controversial matters in the workplace. Instead, keep an open mind and treat others with respect and tolerance.

## **COMPANY & OFFICE CULTURE**

Culture is unique to an organisation and what is acceptable in one company may be frowned upon in another – i.e. a small start-up with less than 20 employees would work very differently to a large multinational corporation. You won't be expected to know the ins and outs of the organisation on your first day so check with your colleagues about any unwritten rules (e.g. casual Fridays, eating at your desk, social media usage etc.) and don't be afraid to ask questions.

# PLACEMENT YEAR CHECK-IN

A member of staff from your School/Department may come and visit you during your placement year, arrange a group meeting or Skype call. The check-in will usually happen halfway through the year and allows us to catch up with your line manager to make sure everything is going smoothly. It is also a good opportunity to check that you understand the academic requirements of your placement year. Students who are working abroad will have a Skype call.





# FACING CHALLENGES DURING YOUR PPY

Your placement year is a fantastic learning experience for both you and your employer. Most students enjoy their placement year thoroughly, establish good working relationships with their manager and colleagues and feel as if they are given the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills.

However, sometimes things do not go as we had planned or hoped. We always encourage students to initially try and resolve any problems themselves by speaking with their line manager/supervisor or HR. Resolving problems in the workplace can feel daunting, but it is an important skill to learn and will show your supervisor that you take your work seriously and can act professionally when facing problems. If you feel as if you need advice or that the discussions with your supervisor are not working, then please do not hesitate to contact your Placement Coordinator or Tutor.

## THE WORK IS DIFFERENT FROM WHAT I EXPECTED

If you feel that the work you are doing is different from what was stated on the job description, contract or discussed during interview, remember that it may take some time before your employer thinks you are ready to take on more complex tasks. For most the first week(s) in a role will be focused on assessing your current

skills and competencies, allowing you to settle in and become familiar with the company culture, values and processes. If you are concerned speak with your supervisor and seek clarification; it may be that they are not aware of what you are expecting or what has been previously discussed.

## PROBLEMS WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR OR A COLLEAGUE

Similar to your life outside of work you may encounter people in the workplace that you do not get on with. As you are working together it is important that you remain professional and we would encourage you to speak with your colleague or manager to try and resolve the problem. If you feel unable to speak with your manager, do you have a mentor you could speak with? If the problems are serious then you should speak with your HR department and receive advice of what steps you can take and the processes in place to support you.

## I AM NOT ENJOYING MY PLACEMENT YEAR

Before speaking with your supervisor or taking action think about the following:

- Is it the role in general that you don't like or are the specific aspects that you are struggling with?
- Were your expectations of your placement realistic?

We would advise that you speak with your manager about how you feel but be prepared to provide **realistic suggestions** on how to improve your job satisfaction. Remember that most jobs are a mix of interesting, exciting tasks and more mundane administrative or repetitive tasks.

## MY CONTRACT HAS BEEN TERMINATED

This is an extremely rare occurrence and you should contact your Placement Tutor/Coordinator immediately to discuss and receive advice on the appropriate action to take.

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## IMPORTANT!

Please read your employment contract thoroughly and make sure to clarify any questions you might have with the employer before signing the contract. The University will not check your contract as we do not have the legal expertise to do so and more importantly, the contract is between YOU and the company. If you need advice you might wish to speak with an adviser in the **Students Union** or contact **Citizens Advice**.

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An aerial photograph of a university campus. In the top left, there are several multi-story university buildings with orange and red facades. The majority of the image is filled with lush green trees. A calm lake is visible in the upper right, reflecting the sky. A paved path winds through the trees in the bottom right corner, where a few people can be seen walking.

# RETURNING FROM YOUR PROFESSIONAL PLACEMENT YEAR

It may take some time for you to adjust to University life when you return from your Professional Placement Year. It's perfectly normal to feel a little out of place but we know from experience that after a few weeks you'll be back into the swing of things.

Your Placement Coordinator and/or Placement Tutor will arrange a welcome back session for you and other returning students in the school. The session will allow you to re-connect with your peers and key people in your School/ Department and bring you up to date with any changes that might have happened at the University while you've been away.

One of the greatest concerns students have about returning to University is that they feel out of practice writing academic essays and referencing. Wherever possible we ask a Study Advisor to join the session and provide a brief reminder of good study skills and share the many resources that are available to all students **online**.

Another important part of the session is to help you reflect on the skills that you have gained and how they will be invaluable during your final year studies: many former PPY students keep their 9-5 working day and find that they have a much easier time of organising their academic work and meeting submission deadlines.

We will also ask your Careers Consultant to come into the session to help you start to reflect on your placement year in terms of what this means for your future career direction, what you enjoyed and found fulfilling about the placement role and what you found was more challenging or uninteresting.

## PLACEMENT YEAR ASSIGNMENTS

Your placement year is a formal part of your degree, but it does not contribute towards your final degree classification as it's assessed on a pass/fail basis. All PPY students are required to submit assignments either during and/or when they return to University. The nature of the assignments varies across Schools so do make sure that you speak to your Placement Tutor and read any additional information provided by your School.

In general, most students will need to submit a placement report and give a presentation once they are back at University for their final year.



# PLACEMENT FAQs

## WHEN DOES THE PLACEMENT YEAR TAKE PLACE?

The Professional Placement Year takes place in your penultimate year of study i.e. you spend two years at the University, one year on placement and then you return to the University for your final year of study.

You will start preparing for your placement year in part 1 of your degree by attending placement training sessions and workshops either within your School/Department or central workshops given by the Careers team.

## I'M NOT ON A DEGREE WITH A PROFESSIONAL PLACEMENT YEAR

If you decide that you would like to do a placement year you can convert to a 4 or 5-year programme. Speak with your Student Support Coordinator or your Placement Coordinator/Tutor to find out more.

## DO I HAVE TO STAY IN THE UK FOR MY PLACEMENT YEAR?

Definitely not! Each year students travel across the world to do a placement year: Australia, China, Kenya, Madagascar and the United States are just a few examples.

## HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE?

Get in touch with your Placement Coordinator/Tutor, they'd be delighted to hear from you! If you're not sure who to contact, just pop into your Support Centre and they will point you in the right direction or email [placements@reading.ac.uk](mailto:placements@reading.ac.uk).

## STUDENT DISCOUNTS

While you are on your Professional Placement Year you are considered to be a full-time student. Therefore, you can still make use of all your student discounts!

## STUDENT OYSTER CARD

If you are living and working in London during your placement year you may be eligible for an **18+ Student Oyster photocard**. For more information and to apply online, please visit **Transport for London's website**. For your application to be approved the University must verify your student status and placement year. Please let your Placement Coordinator/Tutor know if you are applying for the photocard so that they can provide the necessary details to the Student Financial Support team.



“It is truly an invaluable experience. It sounds cringey and scripted, but honestly, I'm loving my placement. It makes it better that I work in a very nice team in a great company. As with anything in life, even university, it is what you make it. If there's a particular task you would like to do, let it be known. If you want to work on a particular project, liaise with the necessary people. All in all, I would definitely recommend the placement year.”

**Marcus Denton**

BSc Mathematics  
PPY at Illumina

# AFTER SECURING YOUR PROFESSIONAL PLACEMENT YEAR

## ✓ SHARE THE NEWS!

Email your placement year details to your Placement Coordinator/Tutor for approval.

## ✓ DO YOU NEED TO TRANSFER COURSE?

If you're currently on a standard 3-year course, you will need to transfer to the version of your course that includes a Professional Placement Year. Contact your Student Support Coordinator or your Placement Coordinator/Tutor for help.

## ✓ COMPLETE THE REQUIRED PAPERWORK

There are certain documents that must be completed before you can start your placement. There may be differences in the requirements between Schools/Department so check with your Placement Coordinator/Tutor what is needed.

## ✓ VISAS AND VACCINATIONS

If your placement year is abroad it is likely that you will need a visa. You may also require vaccinations. This can sometimes be a lengthy process so make sure you don't delay matters.

## ✓ SORT YOUR FINANCES

See **Essentials** for more information on what you can apply for. Speak to the **Student Financial Support Team** with any specific queries.

## ✓ ATTEND A PRE-PLACEMENT TRAINING WORKSHOP

These are organised by each School/Department and usually take place in the summer term of your second year. Check with your Placement Coordinator/Tutor for details of when yours is.

# WHEN YOU START YOUR PROFESSIONAL PLACEMENT YEAR

## ✓ GET INDUCTED & RETURN THE INDUCTION CHECKLIST

During your first week on placement you must complete the Health and Safety Induction Checklist together with your manager and return it to your Placement Coordinator/Tutor.

## ✓ STAY IN TOUCH!

While you are on a placement year you should still check your University email account weekly as any correspondence from your School/Department is sent to this email. Make sure you keep your Placement Coordinator/Tutor informed of any changes to your placement e.g. new location.

## ✓ RE-ENROL

You maintain your student status during your placement year and similar to previous year you should re-enrol before the start of the autumn term. If you do not re-enrol you will not receive any funding from your student finance authority, and you may be asked to pay council tax.

## ✓ PLACEMENT YEAR CHECK-IN

A member of staff from your School/Department may visit you during the placement year or arrange a call via Skype. Your Placement Coordinator or Tutor will be in touch to arrange this.

## ✓ KEEP A DIARY!

Most students will need to submit a written report detailing their placement year when they return to the University. By keeping a diary/journal throughout your year you will more easily remember everything you've achieved and the skills you've developed.



# RESOURCES AND USEFUL CONTACTS

During your placement year you'll have access to your Placement Coordinator/ Tutor for support and advice. You'll also continue to have full access to the student support and wellbeing services. If we can help, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

UNIVERSITY SUPPORT	TELEPHONE	EMAIL
Careers	+44 (0) 118 378 8359	<a href="mailto:careers@reading.ac.uk">careers@reading.ac.uk</a>
Chaplaincy Centre	+44 (0) 118 378 8797	<a href="mailto:chaplaincy@reading.ac.uk">chaplaincy@reading.ac.uk</a>
Counselling & Wellbeing Team	+44 (0) 118 378 4216	<a href="mailto:counselling@reading.ac.uk">counselling@reading.ac.uk</a>
Disability Advisory Service	+44 (0) 118 378 4202	<a href="mailto:disability@reading.ac.uk">disability@reading.ac.uk</a>
Earley Gate Support Centre	+44 (0) 118 378 8020	Contact your Student Support Coordinator or ask a question on the <b>Me@Reading student portal</b>
Edith Morley Support Centre	+44 (0) 118 378 4243	Contact your Student Support Coordinator or ask a question on the <b>Me@Reading student portal</b>
JJ Thomson Support Centre	+44 (0) 118 378 4101	Contact your Student Support Coordinator or ask a question on the <b>Me@Reading student portal</b>
RUSU Advice Service	+44 (0) 118 378 4100	<a href="mailto:advice@rusu.co.uk">advice@rusu.co.uk</a>
Student Financial Support Team	+44 (0) 118 378 7781	<a href="mailto:studentfunding@reading.ac.uk">studentfunding@reading.ac.uk</a>
Student Helpdesk Team	+44 (0) 118 378 5555	<a href="mailto:studenthelp@reading.ac.uk">studenthelp@reading.ac.uk</a>
University Welfare Team	+44 (0) 118 378 4777	<a href="mailto:studentwelfare@reading.ac.uk">studentwelfare@reading.ac.uk</a>
EXTERNAL SUPPORT	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE
NHS	111	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk">www.nhs.uk</a>
NHS Berkshire Mental Health Crisis Team	0300 365 0300 0300 365 9999	<a href="http://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/contact-us/i-need-help-now">www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/ contact-us/i-need-help-now</a>
Papyrus	0800 068 4141	<a href="http://www.papyrus-uk.org">www.papyrus-uk.org</a>
Samaritans	116 123	<a href="http://www.samaritans.org">www.samaritans.org</a>