

THE ACADEMIC PLACEMENT: ENGLISH LITERATURE

Research Teaching Case Study

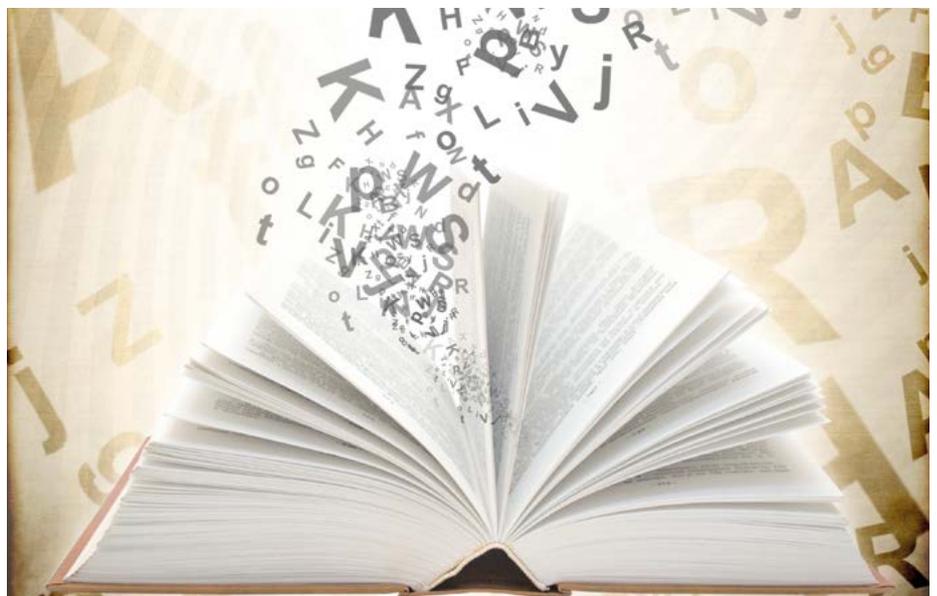
All students in English Literature are offered the opportunity to undertake an academic placement as part of their studies; this can take place before, during or after the work on the module to which the placement is attached.

What is done

This placement might involve work shadowing or participation, but the most popular placements are those that involve a student working with an organisation to investigate an aspect of their work. The student defines and then undertakes a distinct small scale project and then reflects on what they have learnt.

The Academic Placement can be part of any English Literature module. It is directly linked to the learning and assessment of that module. Students who undertake an academic placement submit a placement report in place of the assessed essay for the module, and go on to complete the examination of the module as usual. Placement reports for all academic placements are submitted in the Summer Term.

Examples of recent placements include: working with a local theatre company as part of a modern drama module; working in the University's archives as part of a third year module on Virginia Woolf; a placement at Chawton House (Jane Austen's former home) as part of a module on Austen and creating exhibitions for museums and art galleries.





Why

The academic placement provides students with the opportunity to carry out independent research in an area of interest within an organisation of their choice and with whom they arrange the placement (developing important career skills). It provides students with opportunities to utilise a wide range of transferable skills and to demonstrate these in tangible ways. Students learn to reflect on their experiences; reflective writing, report writing and giving a presentation are new skills for some students, ones that are highly valued by employers. They are also able to try out new career areas, experience different workplaces and do something enjoyable in an area of their own particular interest. A student's completion of an academic placement is recorded on their Diploma Supplement so they are able to discuss it with, and demonstrate its completion to, employers.

The Academic Placement can deepen students' learning on the module, providing them with additional perspectives on the areas that they are studying and increased engagement with the learning objectives (sometimes in advance of the module). It is also good preparation for the dissertation as students gain experience of formulating research questions and working autonomously. The organisation in which the student completes the academic placement benefits from the research undertaken too.

Reflections

The successful provision of an Academic Placement requires good information and guidance to students to ensure that they secure an appropriate placement and define a viable project which is well linked to their module as well as relevant to their placement.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

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