



Student Handbook: Undertaking an Optional Placement Year 2026/27

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If you require advice or guidance about any aspect of the Optional Placement Year, please email placements@nottingham.ac.uk

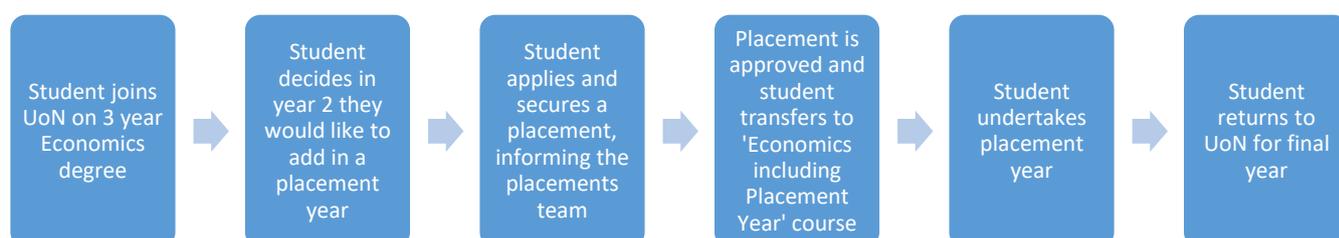
Introducing the Optional Placement Year

The Optional Placement Year is designed for students who wish to add a placement year to their degree. It is aimed at full-time undergraduate and integrated masters' students whose degree programme does not already include;

- An integrated placement year or industrial year, for example, BEng Mechanical Engineering including an Industrial Year, BSc Computer Science with Year in Industry
- Mandatory clinical or practice placements, for example BMBS Medicine
- A compulsory year abroad where there is already an opportunity to undertake a work placement as part of that experience, for example, BA French Studies or BA Politics and French (Joint Honours)

Undertaking an Optional Placement Year extends a three-year degree programme to a four year one (or a four-year degree programme to a five year one). The title of your degree will be altered so that your existing degree becomes a BA/BSc/MSc XXX with Placement Year.

A worked example.



Students from a wide range of degree programmes have undertaken the Optional Placement Year. Examples include.

- BA English including Placement Year: Social Marketing Industrial Placement with Supermarket Chain
- BSc Economics including Placement Year: Risk Analyst with Financial Services Company
- BSc Psychology including Placement Year: Research Assistant with the NHS
- MSc Natural Science including Placement Year: Technology Consultant with Management Consultancy Company
- BSc Pharmacology including Placement Year: Analytical Chemistry Industrial Placement with UK Pharmaceutical Company
- LLB Law including Placement Year: Placement student with International Law Firm

These are only a small number of examples. Please contact us if you would like to query your eligibility to join the Optional Placement Year on your current degree programme.

Finding a Placement

Your placement must be full-time (minimum 30 hrs per week) for a period of no less than nine months and can commence anytime from June, following exams. It is strongly recommended that students undertake a placement with only one employer or organisation during this nine-month period. You may choose to undertake a placement in the UK or overseas (see [Overseas Placements](#)).

You may choose to undertake a placement that is aligned with your degree discipline, or that is not aligned but more closely linked to an area of career interest. Placements must be of 'graduate level', that is requiring skills and/or levels of expertise provided by a degree programme.

You can access the wide range of support offered by the [Careers and Employability Service](#) to assist you with your search and applications. You can book an appointment, attend events, access vacancies, and make use of skills workshops to support you with applications and much more. You can also [view presentations from past placement students](#) to get an insight into what a placement year may be like.

We encourage all students to secure a paid placement where possible. The average salary for UK-based placements is around £20,000 per annum. In some industries/ job-roles, for example the charity sector, it may not be possible to secure a paid placement and it is considered the 'norm' for a placement to be unpaid.

Found a Placement – what happens next?

Once you have been successful in a recruitment process and have accepted an offer of a placement, you must inform the [Placements Team](#) as soon as possible and we will confirm next steps with you. To ensure enrolment on the Optional Placement Year, please inform us if you have secured a placement by the end of July. If you secure a placement offer after this date please notify the [Placements Team](#) at the earliest opportunity.

Your placement will go through an approval process, in which you will be asked to submit information about your placement. After this, you will be contacted by the Placements Team who will;

1. Work with you and your placement provider to undertake a thorough review of the placement in terms of; Health & Safety, Insurance and Risk Assessment (any issues regarding the approval of the placement will be discussed with you).
2. Provide you with guidance on the process for transferring to the 'including Placement Year' version of your degree.
3. Introduce you to your assigned Placement Tutor who will be your dedicated point of contact for the duration of the placement year.
4. Arrange for you to attend a compulsory pre-placement preparation workshop where you will also have the opportunity to meet other students heading out on placement.
5. Provide detailed information to support you in preparing for your placement including but not limited to; Student Finance, Council Tax exemptions, access to UoN Facilities and Services.

Student Status, Assessment, Tuition Fees and Maintenance Loans

You will remain a fully registered student for the duration of the placement year. The placement year will become an assessed and recognised component of your degree.

The assessment process requires you to:

- maintain a reflective journal throughout the placement
- submit a 3,000-word report at the end of the placement and
- submit a pre-recorded presentation once you have returned to the University to start your final year.

The placement will be assessed on a pass or fail basis. It is not credit bearing and will not count towards your degree classification. If you receive a pass mark you will graduate with the recognition of 'including Placement Year' on your degree certificate.

Students on a placement year are subject to reduced tuition fees. This fee covers the support you will receive before, during and after your placement, the assessment of your placement and your continued access to University support services. Full details can be found on the [University Exceptional Fees](#) webpage. You may also be eligible for a reduced maintenance loan. Further information can be found on the [Fees and applying for student finance](#) webpage.

Progression and Resits

Students must meet the University of Nottingham criteria for progression to the following year of study to undertake the Optional Placement Year and to remain on the with Placement Year version of the degree. This means you must successfully complete the relevant stage of your degree (depends on length of your course i.e. three year or four year). If you do not meet the standards to successfully complete this part of your degree you will be unable to progress to the 'including Placement Year' version of the degree programme.

Students who have not met the criteria to progress and are required to undertake resits, must do so at the earliest opportunity, in line with [University of Nottingham course regulations](#). If, following this, you do not meet the criteria for progression to the following year of study you will not be able to continue on the 'including Placement Year' version of the degree. This lack of progression will also have Visa implications if you are an International Student on a student visa.

If you have any questions regarding [progression, resits, first sits or extenuating circumstances](#) please contact your personal tutor, module convenor or [Student Services](#).

Visa Implications for International students

Students on a student visa can complete a placement during their time in the UK. However, undertaking a Placement Year as an option means that a student is adding a placement to their programme of study, that is, they did not enrol on to a programme of study with an integrated placement. This addition of a placement requires an extension of a student visa.

At the point that you are considering undertaking an Optional Placement Year, please contact Visa and Immigration support within Student Services to be provided with the most up to date guidance regarding the possibility of extending your student visa.

Contact: immigration-support@nottingham.ac.uk or ring 0115 846 6125.

Contact information and next steps

If you are starting to search for a placement or require further details about any of the information in this handbook, please visit [our website](#).

Please e-mail queries to: placements@nottingham.ac.uk.

If you have queries regarding fees, funding and student finance should you undertake an Optional Placement Year, please contact financialsupport@nottingham.ac.uk.

If you are an international student with queries, regarding eligibility/visas please contact immigration-support@nottingham.ac.uk.

Additional Information – includes answers to frequently asked questions

Full time Working/ Minimum placement duration

- Whilst there is no set number of hours that defines '[full-time](#)' working, for the purposes of the Optional Placement Year, the minimum expected hours per week is 30 hours. If you secure a placement where the hours are less than this, please contact placements@nottingham.ac.uk
- The minimum duration of a placement (or multiple placements) is 9 months. This is inclusive of all holidays, annual leave and non-working days.

Overseas Placements

- A placement opportunity cannot be approved if it involves (at the time of approval) travelling to a country against CHUBB/Crisis24 Horizon advice.
 - To register for an account please visit the CHUBB/Crisis24 Horizon site, enter your email and then click on 'Create Account'. Then complete the required details, entering '7796' in the 'Member ID' box. Complete the personal details on the next screen and save the form.

- If a country is deemed to be 'high risk' it will require you to complete a high risk placement risk assessment to be reviewed and approved by the Health and Safety office
- If a placement opportunity overseas requires you to obtain a work or study visa, this will need to be achieved by you (the Student) in advance of the placement starting.
- The costs of any visas or other requirements, such as disclosure and barring checks, health screenings cannot be met by the University.

Students with a declared disability or learning difference

- Students who have a disability may find it useful to liaise at an early stage with the University's [Disability Support team](#) within Student Services. The team can be contacted at: disability-supportservices@nottingham.ac.uk or ring 0115 8232070.
- Students with a placement offer should also make sure that their employer is able to accommodate any workplace adjustments that may need to be made prior to your arrival. Students currently receiving the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) may find that this is not payable for their placement year, again the Disability Support Team will be able to give advice on this.
- UK students taking a placement within the UK may be eligible to receive funding under the Access to Work programme. It is not usually possible to begin the process of applying for this funding until you are within six weeks of the start of your placement.

Assessment

- The report and reflective portfolio will be assessed against defined marking criteria which will be provided to you prior to the start of your placement. The presentation is not assessed but students are required to complete this element.
- If you do not pass the assessment element of the Optional Placement Year, the student will transfer back to the original three (or four) year non-placement version of the degree programme and 'including Placement Year' will not be recognised on the degree.

Support during placement

- You will be enrolled on to a Optional Placement Year Moodle module to ensure that you have access to important information and documentation before you start your placement and while you are away from the University. You will also submit your report, reflective portfolio and presentation slides/content via this Moodle page.
- Prior to the commencement of your placement, you will be assigned a Placement Tutor from the Careers and Employability Service. Your Placement Tutor will meet with you prior to your placement and will maintain contact with you for the duration of your placement.
- Your Placement Tutor is your key point of contact at the University while on placement. You must keep them informed of your progress and you must also raise with them at the earliest opportunity any matters for concern (for example, health and safety issues, concerns regarding activities or work you are being asked to undertake).

Health and safety during the placement

- The University expects placement providers to treat our students in the same way as their employees with regards to their health, safety, and welfare. As part of the

Placement Approval Process we (the University) will make checks with your Placement Provider to ensure that they are able to meet our expectations with regards to health and safety. You will also need to confirm to us that you are comfortable with the company's position and perform a risk assessment.

Code of conduct, legal compliance, ethical issues and confidentiality

- University of Nottingham Code of Discipline – you remain a registered student for the duration of the placement. For the duration of the placement you must continue to abide to the University of Nottingham [Student Code of Conduct](#). Failure to do so may lead to failure of the Placement Year.
- Legal compliance and ethical behaviour – the Placement Provider (your host organisation) is fully responsible for all matters of legal compliance during your placement. Ethical code of conduct is a related but separate issue. If you feel you have been asked to undertake something during the course of your job role/duties that you would consider to be unethical that you feel you cannot query or raise with your line manager, we encourage you to raise the concern to your Placement Tutor who will advise on the most appropriate course of action for you to take.
- Confidentiality – you will be expected to behave in the same way as permanent employees of your Placement Provider with regard to confidentiality. Your Placement Provider may request that you sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA). If this is requested, please consult your Placement Tutor before signing the agreement.

Exceptional circumstances – placement/contract does not complete

- The risk for negative issues to arise during the Placement Year will be mitigated by; a rigorous approval process, high quality pre-placement support (from the Placement Tutor and Careers and Employability Service) and regular contact between the Placement Student and Placement Tutor. The University of Nottingham [Policy on Circumstances Affecting Students' Ability to Study and Complete Assessments](#) detailed in the Quality Manual applies at all times and will be used to inform decision making where relevant.
- Should an issue arise – through no fault or misconduct by the Placement Student – that means the minimum nine-month placement cannot be completed as planned (for example, the Placement Provider ceases business operations), a solution will be sought in consultation between the University, the Placement Student and the Placement Provider. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - The Placement Provider securing alternative employment for the Placement Student within another business area/unit, subsidiary company or partner organisation to fulfil the minimum nine-month requirement.
 - The University and student exploring with alternative Placement Providers if they are able to offer an opportunity for a shorter period to allow the student to fulfil the minimum nine-month requirement.
- Should an issue arise as a result of misconduct by the Placement Student that breaches their employment contract with the Placement Provider and/or the 'University of Nottingham Code of Discipline for Students', the placement may be terminated. In this circumstance, the student may be deemed to have failed the Placement Year and will return to complete their subsequent year of study at the start of the next academic year.

Student loans and maintenance loans

- Placement students may be eligible for a tuition fee loan for the reduced fee payable during the Optional Placement Year. UK students undertaking a placement can also apply for a maintenance loan, which may be of a reduced amount. Individual circumstances can differ greatly so we would always advise you to speak to our expert team at financialsupport@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk particularly in relation to maintenance loans and bursaries. However, many of your basic questions will be answered in our [Fees and Funding Guidance](#).

Taxes and National Insurance

- Council tax - students on a placement remain registered as students of the University and are therefore exempt from paying council tax.
- Income tax - all students earning over the personal allowance threshold will be eligible to pay income tax on their earnings. This will be deducted from your salary automatically. Your payslip will indicate the amount of tax you have paid and the tax code you are on. Find out more about [tax codes](#).
- If your placement is abroad The UK's current [tax treaties can be viewed online](#) and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office or HMRC may be able to provide you with further information on the UK's tax arrangement with your placement host's country.
- National Insurance - all students earning over the threshold will pay National Insurance (NI) contributions in addition to Income Tax.

Facilities and service access

Registered students on placement still have access to the full range of facilities on campus including;

- Library services - students on placement are still able to use the libraries as they wish and additional services to improve accessibility are available to those within the UK who are not able to travel to Nottingham. This access is provided by a combination of inter-site loans, access to E-books, postal services and the Copy, Scan, Direct service. The University of Nottingham library is also a member of SCONUL, a scheme which enables library users at any SCONUL library to access facilities at other participating libraries.
- Email - your University of Nottingham email account will remain active during your placement. It is important to regularly check your account to make sure that you don't miss any information from your school and so that the University is able to contact you swiftly.
- Student Services - students will still be able to contact the full range of student services provided by the University. This includes the counselling and student support services. If students currently receive any support from the University, they are advised to inform this service of their intention to take a placement so that the necessary steps can be made to try to maintain this support whilst you are away.
- Careers and Employability Service - the full range of services provided by the Careers and Employability Service is also available to you on placement. Many of the usual services are often available online or over the phone, so it may not be necessary for you to travel to Nottingham.

Working Time Directive

- The University wishes for students to be aware of the Working Time Directive, an initiative which means that it is illegal for employers to require workers to work more than an average of 48 hours per week. The key points to be aware of are: There are some employers who are exempt from this legislation (for example, emergency services) so employees can be required to work more than a 48-hour week in these industries. Employees can 'opt out' of the legislation and work more than 48 hours a week if they wish too. There are some exemptions whereby workers in certain industries are unable to work more than 48 hours even if they want to, for example, airline staff.
- Most placement contracts will not require you to work more than 48 hours a week, but some industries – such as investment banking and the law – are renowned for their long working days and you may be asked to sign an 'opt out' agreement. If you have any concerns understanding the Working Time Directive or the implications of choosing to/choosing not to opt out of the directive, please contact your Placement Tutor or the Careers and Employability Service for advice. The Government has also produced [a useful guide](#).