

AberForward Scheme Guide

Apologies that this Guide is currently available in English only whilst the Scheme is being reviewed

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Contact Details

For questions about the information in this Guide:

Work Experience Team, Careers Service
 Student Support and Careers Services
 Aberystwyth University
 email: aberforward@aber.ac.uk
 phone: 01970 62 1536

For support with completing the application form, or for any careers-related query:

Careers Service
 Student Support and Careers Services
 Aberystwyth University
 email: careers@aber.ac.uk
 phone: 01970 62 2378
 webpage: www.aber.ac.uk/careers

Drop-in service (in the Careers Service's office, next to the shop in the Students' Union building, Penglais campus)

Monday-Thursday: 10.30am-1.00pm & 2.00pm-4.30pm

Friday: 10.30am-1.00pm & 2.00pm-3.30pm

Overview

This guide provides additional information about the AberForward Graduate Scheme and the AberForward Summer Scheme, both of which are coordinated by the University's Careers Service.

The Graduate Scheme is an opportunity for recent graduates to return to Aber to undertake professional work experience and career development training, to update their self-knowledge, add to their CV and provide a platform on which to restart their graduate job search. The Scheme is designed particularly for those who have been unemployed since graduation, or who are working but not in a graduate role.

The Summer Scheme is designed to support 2nd year undergraduates who have told us that they are unsure about their career ideas and/or who lack meaningful work experience, with the aim of enabling them to move into their final year with greater clarity and the skills needed to help make a successful transition from University into graduate work.

Both Schemes aim to help you to develop self-awareness, confidence and self-belief, career planning knowhow, professional and transferable graduate skills, and competence in applying for jobs and going for interviews, and so enhance your ability to succeed in the graduate job market. Most importantly, you will be *applying* your skills in a professional work environment, providing context and evidence to demonstrate to future employers what you can do.

A summary of the two Schemes is below:

	Summer Scheme	Graduate Scheme
Eligibility¹	Current 2 nd year undergraduate students at Aberystwyth University	Graduates who were awarded an undergraduate degree from Aberystwyth University the previous Summer
	All AberForwards must also be: → available full-time for the duration of the Scheme → eligible to work in the UK full-time as per UKVI requirements	
Salary²	Real Living Wage (currently £9.30 per hour*)	Grade 3 (currently £9.32 per hour*)
Scheme duration	3 weeks full-time (3-week placement)	5 weeks full-time (4-week placement and 1 week of training)
Scheme dates	Usually the first 3 weeks in August	Usually the last 5 weeks of the Spring term, i.e. late February/March
Hours of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time, 36.5 hours per week, usually worked on a Monday-Friday basis. • Work patterns vary from department to department but a common work pattern is 9.00am-5.30pm Monday-Thursday and 9.00am-4.30pm on Fridays, with 1 hour for lunch each day. • During the Graduate Scheme, the timetable for the 5 days of training is also planned on a full-time basis. 	

*as at August 2019

Employment Status²

Please note that, if you gain a place on an AberForward Scheme, *you will be an employee of the University for the duration of the Scheme*. In addition, administration of the Scheme has been designed to reflect the real world of work.

This means that you will:

- attend a Scheme induction, as a group with other AberForwards
- sign a contract of employment
- be expected to behave as a professional member of staff
- receive a staff account, staff Abercard and access to University buildings, systems and resources relevant to your employment
- receive a staff email address that you will be expected to use for the duration of the placement; personal and student email addresses must not be used for University business or for communications to and from the AberForward team once the Scheme starts and the staff account has been activated
- be paid through the University's payroll system on the last working day of each calendar month. Please note: if a Scheme starts very close to the end of a calendar month, i.e. after that month's payroll has been set up, the salary from any days worked in that month will be paid in the following month's payroll
- be entitled to paid annual leave

Recruitment Process

1. Register interest

Around 3 months before a Scheme starts, the AberForward team will email those eligible to apply to that particular Scheme to provide initial information, including the Scheme dates, and to invite them to use a short online form to register their interest in taking part. ¹Eligibility and the entry requirements for the particular Scheme will be clearly stated in this initial communication.

Please note: graduates should make sure that their student record is updated with the correct personal email address if they wish to receive information about the AberForward Graduate Scheme.

At the same time, the AberForward team will collate details of placement opportunities that University departments are able to host as part of the next Scheme, and arrange for the placement information to be made available in both Welsh and English, in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards.

2. Online application

Once applications open, those who have registered interest in the Scheme will be sent a link to the online application form. The closing date for completed applications will also be advised.

You should understand that you'll be applying to join the Scheme, rather than to a specific job role, therefore there is no individual 'person specification' for each placement, as would usually be found in a job vacancy.

However, a List of Placements being offered as part of the Scheme, along with a brief description of each role and the work involved, is provided with the application link. Each placement description also states the name of the main supervisor and the department and campus location where the placement will be based.

Previous work experience is not required but some roles may specify in the description that certain knowledge is needed, for example, of a particular programming language for a placement in the Department of Computer Science. Generally though, all roles will have been designed to suit students or graduates who may have little or no work experience.

3. Placement roles

The University is busy all year round which creates a variety of work experience opportunities in both academic and professional services departments.

As part of the online application, you'll be asked to indicate your preferences by selecting up to 5 placements from the List of Placements provided.

When making your choices, please consider:

- the type of work you're looking for
- the skills and knowledge you hope to develop by undertaking the placement
- the subject you studied and whether you wish to undertake work experience in the same or a related field, or a completely different field
- your current skills and interests and what you can already bring to the placement
- whether there are any essential requirements in order to undertake the placement, for example, fluent Welsh language skills, or to be studying or have graduated from a particular subject, department or Faculty
- the location of the placement and whether you can get there easily

4. Selection

¹Please note, in terms of eligibility, and especially if the Scheme is over-subscribed, priority will be given to applicants who have undertaken little or no graduate level work experience to date or who are undecided about their career ideas.

The Graduate Scheme will also prioritise those who are unemployed, or who are working but not in the type of graduate role they are seeking.

After the closing date, applications are 'matched' to the available placements by considering:

- the placement preferences selected by the applicant
- the rationale of the applicant for applying to the Scheme and what they hope to gain by taking part
- the best fit between the type of work experience and development opportunities the applicant is seeking and the roles and type of experience that departments are offering
- whether any essential criteria in relation to Welsh Language skills or subject studied have been met
- whether any other criteria stated by the supervisor in the placement description as being necessary in order to undertake the particular role (such as specific skills or knowledge) have been met.

Interviews are not part of the formal selection process.

Due time is taken to complete these processes to ensure selection to the Scheme and allocation of placements is fair, and the best possible fit for both applicants and departments is achieved.

Whilst we endeavour to match applicants to placements that best fit their selected preference(s) and their goals for the Scheme as described in their application, preferably their 1st or 2nd choice of placement, it's important to note that we CANNOT guarantee that we will always be able to match applicants to their desired placement, or even to one of their 5 selected preferences.

You are strongly advised to refer to the 'Application Tips' provided in this document before submitting your application.

5. Application outcome

Applicants are advised of the outcome of their application by email within 3 weeks of the closing date.

Applications will only be reopened after the closing date if there are still available placements waiting to be matched/allocated.

Once placements have been allocated, supervisors will make informal contact with their AberForward, by email, telephone, Skype or in person if convenient, to provide further details about the role and to answer any questions about starting the placement.

The AberForward team will also send out joining instructions, including details of the AberForward induction on Day 1, around a week before the Scheme starts.

6. Right to Work in the UK

If you are offered a place on the Scheme, and accept the offer, the next steps will involve providing personal information to the Human Resources department in order for an employee profile to be created for you.

As with any new member of staff, the University's Human Resources department is legally required to complete Right to Work checks with successful candidates. To avoid any delays, please make sure in advance that you have a PASSPORT to hand and can also readily provide your NATIONAL INSURANCE NUMBER. Information on alternative Right to Work documents that can be accepted if you do not have a passport can be found at <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/employment-information/visas/>.

Full step-by-step instructions on what you need to do to complete the recruitment process will be provided. Everything must be completed at least 1 week before the Scheme starts.

Initially, the required information will be requested electronically, online and/or by email. However, the original document that you use to prove your Right to Work must be viewed in person by a member of the HR team too, for verification purposes, before your employment can start, therefore you will also be asked to bring the original to the induction session on Day 1 of the Scheme.

PLEASE NOTE: you will not be able to commence your employment until the original Right to Work documentation has been provided. If you forget to bring it with you on Day 1, it may take a few days for the documentation to be sent to you, or for you to go home to get it. Please avoid such delays by remembering to bring it with you!

7. Withdrawing from the Scheme

If at any time you wish to cancel your application, or a place on the Scheme if one has been offered, please just advise the AberForward team by email. Please do so at the earliest opportunity as, if you were due to take part in the Scheme, it may be possible to offer your place to an applicant on the reserve list. If you are offered employment prior to starting the Graduate Scheme, please don't worry about cancelling your place on the Scheme at short notice, we will be glad for you!

Placement Support

During your placement, you'll receive regular support from a named supervisor and you'll be given clear tasks that will enable you to set personal and work goals for the placement.

The AberForward team is also always on hand throughout the placement to help you to resolve any issues or queries. As an employee, you will also be able to access the support of the Human Resources department if necessary.

In the online application, you'll be asked if you have any disability, learning difference or health issue that the AberForward team and your supervisor should be aware of, and whether there are any reasonable adjustments that can be put in place to ensure you have the best possible experience when undertaking any placement you may be offered. The AberForward team does not have access to your student record and will not know anything about you, so you are encouraged to use this section of the form to provide any relevant information.

Working Pattern and Authorised Absence

As noted in the overview section, the placements are all full-time (36.5 hours per week) but the actual start and end times each day and 'core hours' of work will be confirmed by your individual supervisor during the department induction. You cannot choose the hours/days that you work to make up the 36.5 hours per week.

Also, some roles may require you to be flexible and work your hours at varying times in certain weeks depending on departmental requirements, including sometimes on weekends and in evenings.

As a member of staff, you'll also be entitled to paid annual leave; your contract of employment, issued on Day 1 of the Scheme, will confirm how much. Annual leave must be taken as time off during the Scheme for which you will be paid, we cannot provide extra payments in lieu of any holiday entitlement not taken.

If you receive offers of interviews that fall within the Scheme dates, you would just need to keep your supervisor informed about this necessary absence.

Information on taking holidays and also the procedure for sick leave will be provided during the Scheme induction. Unauthorised absence contravenes the contract of employment.

Career Planning and Job Search Support

The Graduate Scheme includes a professional development programme that involves a series of workshops and activities. These have been designed to help you to identify your strengths, and refresh and build your career planning and management skills, motivation and career focus. The workshops are run over 5 days, usually 3 days at the start of the Scheme, and then 2 at the end, with the 4-week (20 day) placement being undertaken in between, uninterrupted. Attendance on the training days is mandatory.

The training is delivered by our team of Careers Consultants; we endeavour to arrange for employers and alumni to contribute to these sessions as well. The timetable is provided with the joining instructions that are sent out around a week before the Scheme starts.

Workshops are not run during the Summer Scheme as current students have the opportunity to attend similar workshops held throughout the academic year.

You're welcome and encouraged to visit the Careers Service at any time and however often. Unlike many other Universities, we offer a lifelong service to Aberystwyth University graduates. The Careers Service's webpage, www.aber.ac.uk/careers, provides more information about the number of ways in which we can offer help and support, whether you're taking part in the Scheme or not.

We offer a drop-in service, or you can make an appointment. Help and support can also be provided via email, Skype and phone if you can't visit in person. Our contact details are provided on page 1.

It's also recommended that you use the Careers Service's on-line portal, *ABERcareers*, at www.aber.ac.uk/ABERcareers, where you'll have access to a wealth of information on current opportunities, vacancies, workshops and events. You can also make a 1:1 appointment with a Careers Consultant via this portal. Once you have left the University, you will need to re-register as a graduate.

All AberForwards are offered a careers guidance interview with one of our Careers Consultants as part of the Scheme. This 1:1 meeting will enable AberForwards to:

- review their current situation, their reasons for joining the Scheme and their original goals
- identify skills and attributes that have been achieved or strengthened
- discuss and bring more focus to their career ideas if undecided
- develop a plan of action for their next steps that capitalises on the learning and experience gained from participating in the Scheme and helps to keep the momentum going.

Accommodation

On-campus accommodation for the duration of the Scheme can usually be arranged for those needing it. Please indicate in the relevant section of the online application form if you are likely to require accommodation, even if you're not 100% sure.

Once places on the Scheme have been offered and accepted, further details about the facilities, location, cost, booking process and how to pay the accommodation fees will be sent by the University's Accommodation or Conference Office to those who indicated that they will need to stay on campus.

Feedback and Reference Requests

As the Scheme comes to an end, supervisors will meet their AberForward to review performance and progress and to give and receive feedback. They will also provide the correct contact information to use when providing reference request details to employers. You're also welcome to use the AberForward team as a general reference as we can confirm details such as attendance.

Application Tips

AberForward Schemes can be very over-subscribed with two, three or even four times as many applications received for the number of places available. These tips have been put together to help increase the chance that your application will be successful, and that you are matched to your preferred placement opportunity.

General

- Make and take appropriate time to complete the application to the best of your ability. You can start, save and return to it before final submission.
- Avoid common mistakes which include (but are not limited to):
 - poor written communication skills, e.g. poor sentence construction, no spell check
 - blank or incomplete sections and unanswered questions
 - single word or brief answers where a considered narrative and more detail is required
 - generally minimal effort being made to answer the question(s) to the level required.
- Once you feel your application is finished, ask a friend or family member, or the University's Careers Service, to give it a final check, even if you're satisfied you've written the best application that you can. It's always a good idea to have a fresh pair of eyes look over an application before its submitted.
- Always check your Junk mail for any communications from the University.

Placement selection

- Don't make your placement selections based on the placement titles in the drop-down menu alone! **First read through the descriptions in the List of Placements provided to you, from start to finish!** This will ensure you're aware of all the placement opportunities that are available and help you to form a plan as to which would suit you.
- Make a note of any essential criteria – you may not be eligible for every placement.

- Consider the full range of placements available, in both academic and service departments. All work experience is valuable, by developing transferable skills but also by exposing you to different work environments and new ideas, contacts and settings that will help to focus your career interests and next step plans.
- If you're unsure about the type of work you want to do and therefore which placements to select as your preferences, seek support with your decision-making from the University's Careers Service.
- The more placements you select, the better. If you only select 1, and many other applicants select this placement too, it's possible that you may not be offered a place at all, so it's important to have back-up options.

Why?

The selection process will consider who has been able to articulate in their application that they would benefit the most from taking part; this point becomes particularly important if the Scheme is oversubscribed.

- Be clear and comprehensive about your reasons for applying to the Scheme. What do you hope to gain by taking part? Have you identified a gap in your skill-set that the Scheme could help fill? Describe fully how the Scheme will contribute to both your personal and professional development, enhance your skills and support your career aspirations.
- Convey enthusiasm for learning and new experiences and your desire to make the most out of your time on the Scheme.
- If applying to the Graduate Scheme, demonstrate your commitment to engaging in the Scheme as a whole, that is the professional development training and the work placement.
- Ask for help to complete the form if you need it, either from the University's Careers Service or family/friends. Remember that the AberForward team does not have any prior knowledge of you. If the information you provide is brief and/or vague, it's unlikely to stand up against another applicant who has provided a considered response and the required detail. You might be the best candidate in reality, but we cannot read between the lines, we can only base our decisions on the information provided in the application form.

Testimonials from past AberForwards

- *It helped to boost my confidence in the job market as prior to the experience I had applied to a lot of jobs with only one interview and no success whereas I was offered four interviews in the two months after the scheme. The scheme also made me more motivated to find a job as I had discovered that having a routine made me feel valuable.*
- *It has made me realise my strengths and abilities, and the types of roles in which I would excel and enjoy. I can see now that I am more prepared for working life than I believed I was, and that I am capable of pursuing my aspirations.*
- *I had absolutely no idea how to even start breaking into a career path before the scheme. It has helped me feel more optimistic about the possibilities of graduate life.*
- *AberForward has reaffirmed what I believed I was good at and has encouraged me that my career plan is right. I now have a better understanding of what it's like to work and have gained confidence to search for jobs and approach new employers.*
- *It was a great, life changing opportunity that helped with my self-confidence and opened many doors for me. I am absolutely proud of my university to have such a useful scheme like this.*
- *The AberForward placement gave me confidence to apply for jobs I previously wouldn't have applied for.*

- *I am certainly more confident in the work place. I am more confident in my own abilities to complete tasks, as well as my communication skills with colleagues. It's also shown me the value of thinking outside the box and how positive contributions in a workplace can have a positive effect.*
- *AberForward made the process of working a full working week far easier to adjust to. It also made understanding office dynamics and relationships easier and allowed me to show my current employer I had a strong work ethic despite periods of unemployment.*
- *Before starting the Graduate Scheme, I felt deflated after leaving University and having to begin employment in a sector I was not interested in. Gaining a position with the scheme brought my spirits up as I was back in the university environment and also working in a position which was relevant to my interests.*
- *I am currently volunteering in order to gain valuable work experience and make contacts in the field that I would like to pursue a career. The AberForward placement was relevant to this specialist area and also provided organisational skills that can be transferred to many other potential jobs.*
- *The scheme was fun, busy and included various activities.*
- *I really enjoyed the experience and it has opened my mind to other options. It has increased my self-confidence greatly.*
- *I would recommend the scheme to anyone because it certainly helps to increase the chance of finding employment.*
- *Thank you for the fantastic opportunity. Aberystwyth has become such a special place to me and I am eternally grateful for the opportunity offered by AberForward.*

*Thank you for reading
October 2019*