

Classroom Observation at Penglais School, Aberystwyth

A Guide for Applicants

The Careers Service at Aberystwyth University has been working with Penglais School for a number of years to provide classroom observation experience to Aberystwyth University students. As well as a focused work experience opportunity, these placements also offer the chance to interact and network within a school environment, to learn and understand school management processes, and to gain a reference for any future teacher training application.

If you think teaching may be for you, you'll be aware that completing relevant experience is essential. ***This guide has been written to help you to maximise your chances of being accepted for this fantastic placement opportunity; please read it carefully.***

General Information

To enable these opportunities to be offered in a fair and structured way, the work experience at Penglais School is usually arranged at two set times in each academic year, in late January and again in late May/early June (around the time University exams end).

Interested students should note that, in **January**, there should be opportunities to observe teaching in **all** school years but, during the **summer** placement, there will be **no Year 11 and Year 13** classes in the timetable to observe.

Flexibility is essential as, whilst every effort is made to offer experience of observing teaching in the subject(s) specified in the successful student's application, plans may need to be adjusted nearer the start date, or even during the placement, depending on circumstances and teacher availability at that particular time.

Where a full timetable in the subject area/main area of interest cannot be provided, a full timetable including observation in other areas will be put in place, which will still provide excellent experience of classroom management, teaching and learning styles and school life and operations.

Making a start – first do your research!

Think about what a career as a teacher will be like, and what makes a good teacher. Visit the [Department for Education 'Get into Teaching'](#) and the [Prospects](#) websites as a starting point. Also, if any members of your family or acquaintances are teachers, have a conversation with them about teaching as a career. Research the [National Curriculum](#). You might also find the [professional standards for teachers](#) helpful.

Making an application

To apply to this opportunity, students will need to submit a personal statement which will be reviewed by the School's Deputy Headteacher. There is usually high demand for these opportunities and submitting a tailored, relevant and well thought through statement will be essential. Where there are too many good applications for the number of places available, priority will be given to final year students who need the experience to put in place their immediate next steps.

The selectors will be checking that you have done your research and have a good understanding of what teaching is all about. They'll also be looking for commitment, enthusiasm, energy and excitement and a genuine interest in teaching as a career and in your chosen subject(s). They also want to know from your application why *you* think *you* would make a good teacher!

You are welcome to submit an application at any time of year which will be kept until selection takes place for the next intake. However, the Careers Service will email all students to notify them when applications for the next intake are open, so you can wait until then if you wish – please look out for this email and check your Junk Inbox for emails from careers@aber.ac.uk.

Please follow the instructions and guidance on the next page when completing and submitting your application.

Completing and submitting your personal statement

- Start with your name and preferred pronoun, and details of the course you are studying, e.g.
Jane Smith (she/her)
BA (Hons) History, Year 2
Year of graduation: 2024
- Be succinct! Your personal statement should preferably be no more than 1 page of A4 long.
- Clearly articulate your rationale for applying to this specific and individual opportunity.
- Convey your interest in / passion for teaching, demonstrating your research into this career.
- Explain how completing classroom observation in this way will contribute to your career plans and aspirations.
- Show that you will be committed to attending for the maximum time available – it is a lot of work for the school to set up timetables for all the students on placement and they need to feel that there will be no unexplained absences. If you already have an appointment or exam on any of the stated days, include this information in your personal statement.
- Be clear about the subjects you're interested in observing, in order of priority, but also show you are flexible and willing to be placed with teachers of other subjects.
- Emphasise any previous experience of working with children and young people, in a teaching or other capacity, paid or unpaid, formal or informal. For example, brownies, cubs, guides, sports clubs, sporting events, music clubs, drama productions, baby-sitting, taking care of siblings, holiday schemes, homework clubs, as well as any other school experience.
- Highlight your enthusiasm for your chosen subject(s) – think about your favourite modules and any other study, research, fieldwork, lab work, dissertation work or technical/practical skills completed or developed as part of your degree that will be relevant.
- Think about the skills and qualities you can offer and extract from these the skills and qualities needed to be a good teacher. For example, presentation skills, creativity, organisation skills, helping skills, ability to develop trust and rapport, patience. Describe the situations where you have developed and used these skills and, again, keep it relevant.
- Other skills, achievements, hobbies and interests are always useful to include too, as they can show the kind of person you are, but also the other things that you could bring to the life of the school. For example, prizes/awards you've received; membership of teams and committees; IT know-how; languages spoken; performing/creative arts and sport activities you're involved in.
- Provide the name and email address of at least one person who can provide a reference for you (such as your personal tutor) and state how you know them.
- Do a spell check and also make sure your page set-up enables all information to display when printed.
- Take a break then re-read your statement before submitting. Preferably ask someone else to proofread it too. You can of course also seek support with reviewing your application from the Careers Service, just email the draft to careers@aber.ac.uk
- Email your final application to workexp@aber.ac.uk by the deadline (provided in the original email). Late applications cannot be accepted. Please submit .doc / .docx documents only (MS Word). Other formats including .pdf cannot be accepted.

What happens next?

After the closing date for the intake to which you've applied, all applications are forwarded to Penglais School to make the selections. There are no interviews.

Successful and unsuccessful applicants are informed of the outcome via an email from the Careers Service as soon as the school's decisions have been received.

Successful applicants are provided with 'joining instructions' for the placement and arrival on the first day.

Thank you for reading.