Manchester School of Architecture

Applications for Getting a Year - Out Placement

These notes are based on the session held in March 2013 presented jointly by The University of Manchester Careers Service, The Manchester Metropolitan University Careers and Employability Service and The Manchester School of Architecture for BA Year 3 students.

The following information is aimed at students who will be seeking placements in the UK. Some general information about recruitment practices outside the UK is available from the Careers Services.

Check out Careers Service resources to help with your preparation.

Method of Application

Do you know what is required?

Have you checked the method of application? In most cases it will be a CV with samples of work (application portfolio) and a covering letter.

Should the application be sent as a paper copy or electronically as an attachment? What type of format - Adobe PDF or as a Word document? As so many applications are now sent electronically some practices may find that a paper application stands out. It could also be seen by more than one person in an office.

Check, if necessary, the format required by the practice.

Practices will look for:

- A thorough understanding of and enthusiasm for, Architecture and the built environment
- Evidence of being organised, competent, and achieving dependably high standards both in design and in working to specifications and schedules
- The ability to come up with effective/creative solutions to design and construction problems
- Presentation and graphic skills (including design packages such as Sketch-Up, Photoshop, InDesign, AutoCAD, Revit, Archicad, VectorWorks, 3d studio max and MicroStation)
- A limited but varied number of 'visual' samples that demonstrate a range of projects and their progression
- Work samples should be attractive, legible, and professional and have visual impact
- Applications received before the closing date, if one is specified

Practices will also look for people and organisation skills:

These will have been developed primarily through work experience and personal interests:

- Ability to work effectively with clients and on-site teams
- Able to work on own and prioritise tasks
- Team working
- Communication skills
- Flexibility, adaptability, multi-tasking ability, fresh thinking, inquisitiveness,

realism, focus, reliability, etc

To market yourself effectively, your CV must provide evidence of:
- Your experience
- Your skills (e.g. people, design, project management)
- Your interests and strengths (e.g. design/ implementation, urban/rural regeneration, conservation/restoration, sustainable/green design, residential/commercial/community development)
- Your contributions, especially in teams
- Your successes and achievements

Utilise...
- Relevant elements of the course
- Activities outside of it
- 'Personal' experience - projects, design work, contact with professionals e.g. surveyors, planners
  .... **to 'build and design' your CV and illustrate your achievements.**

Ensure your CV is:
- Professional, attractive and 'designed'. Avoid too many changes of colour, shading and font
- Readable when copied or e-mailed

N.B.: Some spam filters screen out images.

CV - Structure, Design & Style
Your CV needs to be well produced
Good visual appearance and easy to read - clear font and size of type
CV normally two pages A4 white paper
Checked for correct spelling (UK not US English), punctuation etc
Spell checker will not tell you about incorrect word usage, so proof read
Tone positive - use action words

Action Words - Examples

Achieved	Constructed	Managed
Advised	Designed	Negotiated
Analysed	Devised	Organised
Arranged	Evaluated	Persuaded
Budgeted	Founded	Prioritised
Built	Implemented	Researched
Completed	Initiated	

CV – Format

Suggested Sections

Your name and contact details
Include professional email and personal website - if you have one

Education & Qualifications
University - include options and design projects
Secondary and Further Education
Related subjects e.g. Art, are important, but be concise.

Architectural Experience
Include:
   Travel and study trips
   Awards and scholarships
   Exhibitions
   Related work experience - architectural practices, construction work, house
   renovation etc.

Additional Work Experience (including temporary, vacation and voluntary experience)

Interests & Activities (including student membership of RIBA, MSA, and other related groups and societies)

Positions of Responsibility/Achievements (if appropriate)

Additional Skills (including driving, languages and IT skills, especially design packages)

Referees Ask their permission first and check their preferred contact details. There is an expectation that at least one referee will be from MSA.

Evidencing your Application

For each major activity you write on your CV:-
- Give it a meaningful heading and, only if necessary, a brief description
- Describe what YOU actually did rather than outlining the task/job description
- Outcome/Result

Covering Letter - Format & Content

- One side, carrying through the design elements of your CV
- Good quality A4, white paper
- Word processed unless handwritten letter requested
- Lay out as a formal business letter
- Avoid flowery phrases e.g. "I beg to remain…."
- Check for correct spelling and grammar

Your letter should be targeted for each individual application.

Well set out and in a formal style even if sent as an e-mail attachment.

Include your contact details – letter could become detached from your CV.

Where possible make it personal – addressed to a named contact but do **not** use both first and family name e.g. Dear Adam Smith

Remember the conventions to be used:-

Dear Ms Jones or Mr Smith	Yours sincerely
Dear Sir/Madam	Yours faithfully

- State clearly which vacancy you are applying for i.e. year out placement, quoting reference number if appropriate
- Your reasons for applying
- Your interest in working for the practice
- A very brief summary of the personal skills and qualities you have to offer linked to your CV. You are not repeating your CV just highlighting the key ones you have to offer
- Print your name under signature
- When making several applications at the same time, double-check that you put them in the correct envelope!
- Use an A4 envelope to avoid folding and add the correct postage
- When sending electronically you should still send a formal type covering letter with your CV if it is sent as an attachment. Your e-mail should be a short formal one which should indicate what you are applying for or requesting e.g. Part 1 Year-Out Placement and should be readable without the need to scroll down.
- Keep a record and copy of all your applications

Collect samples of work for your application portfolio

Consider carefully your choices of what examples to include.

Highlight your range of skills – a mixture of elements e.g.
2D drawings, 3D diagrams/drawings, technical drawings, line drawings free-hand, use of CAD, hand drawn sketches , photographs, evidence of model making, plans, elevations, perspectives.

The portfolio should include examples where possible targeted to the interests/work areas of the practice/organisation.

Choose an interesting selection.

Application Portfolio

Normally three or four sheets of A4.

Balance of text (not too wordy) and images.

Good images – it may be photocopied. Check to see what it looks like especially if the original includes colour images.

You may need to provide different examples of work for different practices.

To be attached as part of your application as this is the easiest format for many recruiters.

Include your name (in a header or footer) on all the pages.

If linking to a web-based portfolio, check your website in different browsers to see what it looks like. It is not so easy to target your web-based portfolio to the needs of individual practices so it could be a supplement to a paper-based one which is targeted.

Helpful Comments from Recruiters

- Application must be well produced
- Presentation important – clear and simple
- Do not assume that everyone reviewing applications will have access to Photoshop!
- Graphic presentation of CV and work important
- We are not impressed by obvious circular covering letters
- Don't quote verbatim from our website
- Correct spelling and grammar particularly our practice name in the covering letter
- We expect applicants to have researched our practice and for this to be reflected in their application

Top Tips

- Make your application 'architecture focused'
- Avoid using CV templates
- Make sure that covering letters are targeted to individual employers
- Use Careers Service resources
- Keep a copy - to help prepare for interview

Contacts

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