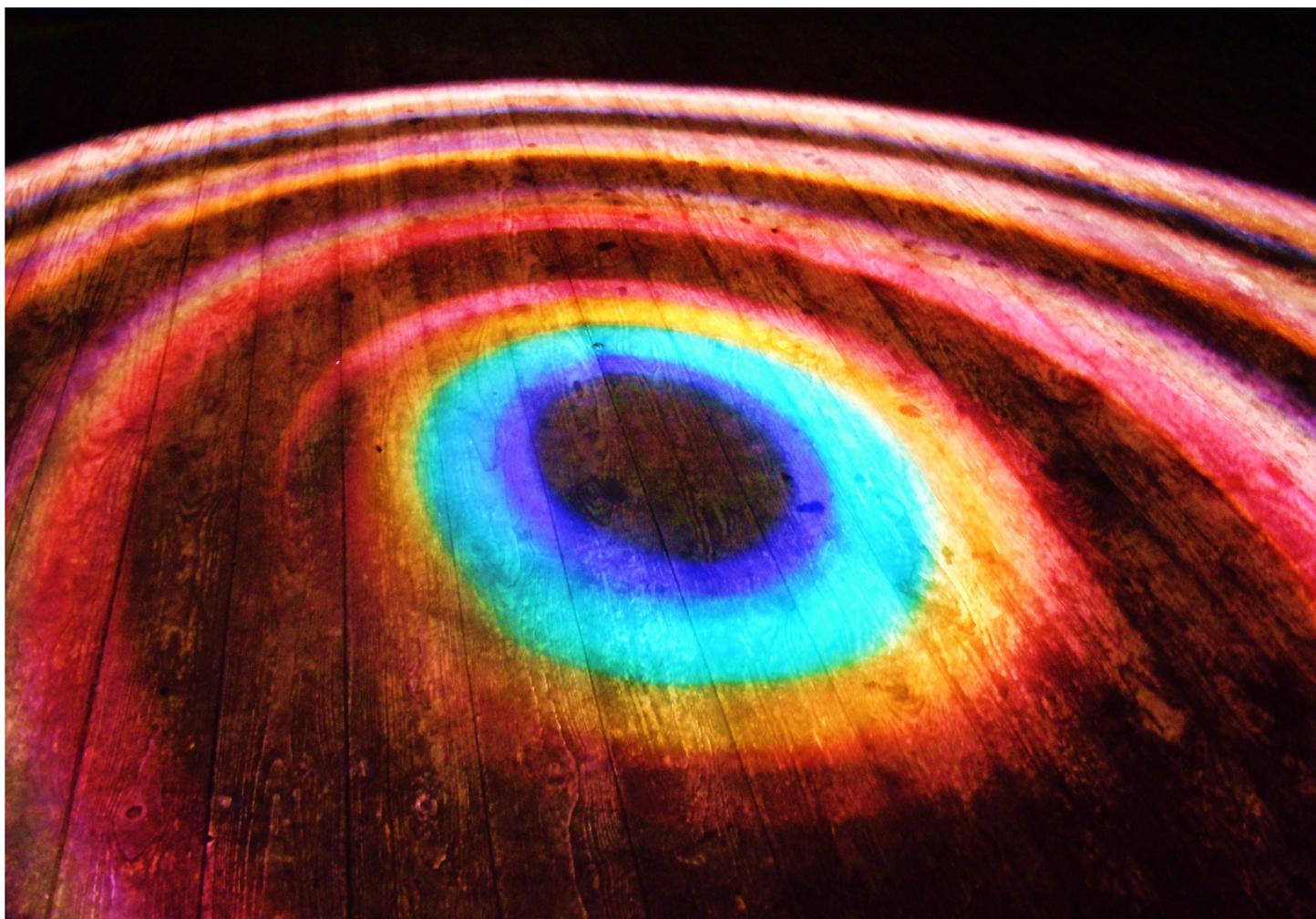


Researcher's Guide to placements



The 'Afterlife of Heritage Research' Training Programme

<http://www.heritageafterlife.com>



<http://www.facebook.com/groups/heritageafterlife/>



@HeritageAfter



Afterlife of Heritage Research Project

About

The 'Afterlife of Heritage Research' Skills Training Programme (2012-13) supported more than fifty re-search students and early career researchers (ECRs) in developing skills, capacity and profiles for profes-sional careers in the heritage sector. The project's tailored training provision (including skills workshops, collaborative public engagement projects, work placements in cultural institutions and industrial mentoring) assisted students and ECRs in identifying, understanding and 'translating' the benefits of their heritage re-search in 'real-life' public, professional and business contexts.

The training programme produced four self-completion training guides that were informed by the interaction between partners and the students' and ECRs' experiences in collaborating with cultural organisations and professionals. The guides as well as reflective blog posts and short documentary films (available on the training programme's website: <http://www.heritageafterlife.com/>) aim to: assist humanities research stu-dents and ECRs in exploring how public engagement and research placements can benefit them, their re-search, and the relevance of their research to non-expert audiences; help students and ERCs think crea-tively about possible business or enterprise prospects of their research; contribute to the training provision offered by Researcher Development teams at UK Universities; and enable cultural organisations design and run placements that benefit them, researchers and the public.

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Introduction



Placements (or research residencies) for researchers are complementary to the process of undertaking research and are an increasingly popular way of developing ideas & networks, gathering data and applying research in a real-life context. Placements provide an opportunity to work in partnership with organisations and provide new perspectives on research and its impact. Placements go hand-in-hand with public engagement projects (see the “Researcher’s Guide to Engagement”), prompting people to be interested in research and how it applies to the real world.

This self-completion guide has been designed for researchers who are new to, or have some experience of research placements. It will allow you to:

- Explore how research placements can benefit you, your research, and the public with whom you engage
- Discover the range of placement opportunities available
- Understand the benefits of working with cultural organisations
- Design meaningful placements which directly benefit your research and the cultural organisation with whom you work
- Reflect on the research placement process and identify ways of applying the knowledge gained in your research, and other contexts

You can work through the guide independently or use it as a trigger for discussion with your supervisor, cultural organisation or fellow researchers.

Activities are shown by  **A**

Useful resources are highlighted by  **R**



What do you hope to gain or learn by completing this guide?

What are research placements?

Placements vary significantly in their scope and format. Placements are also known by different names such as research residencies, researcher work experience, fellowships, secondments or internships. Generally, most research placements involve the collaboration of knowledge and experience between the researcher and a cultural partner or organisation. They contribute significantly to the impact of research on the wider community and the production of “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1973).

“Placements/internships can widen the talent pool available to an organisation. Placements/internship programmes allow organisations to develop a new pipeline of talent, introducing innovation and transferable skills, to build relationships with universities and to engage with university research activities. They offer the opportunity to give researchers professional development...to have experience in the job applications processes and requirements as well as work-based learning in a non-higher education environment and managing career expectations outside academia”

Work Experience: Placements/internships outside academia, Vitae

Placements cover a wide range of activities, in partnership with cultural organisations, offer a unique opportunity to apply research expertise such as: managing research projects, sharing knowledge with professionals, providing advice and consultation, editing material, data collection and management and preservation. This list is by no means exhaustive and researchers are encouraged to design placements which are innovative and impactful.

The diagram below outlines the process of undertaking research placements, and how they feed into research projects:

Adapted from **The Development Pyramid**
(Beetham and Sharpe 2008)



There are a number of placement and research residency projects which can be run in partnership with cultural organisations. Examples include working with archival material, shadowing museum professionals and curators, working with educational and public events teams, public engagement and researching collections.



Try to envisage a typical placement activity, or choose an example from the list above – what would it look/sound like?

Identify the benefits of the placement to

1. yourself (the researcher)
2. the cultural organisation
3. your university

An “Ideal” Placement (provide a short description)

Benefits to the researcher

Benefits to the cultural organisation

Benefits to the University

Why carry out placement projects?

The last activity was designed to help you identify the many benefits for engaging in placement activities. The Research Councils are increasingly encouraging researchers to engage with cultural (and other) organisations and to undertake research residencies, see for example, the ESRC's Public Placement Fellowship Scheme: <http://centrallobby.politicshome.com/fileadmin/epolitix/stakeholders/FLYER.pdf> and the AHRC's International Placement Scheme: <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/Pages/InternationalPlacementScheme.aspx>.

So why should you...?

Research Councils UK (RCUK) describes this kind activity as "People Exchange", facilitating the exchange of people between the research base and other organisations:

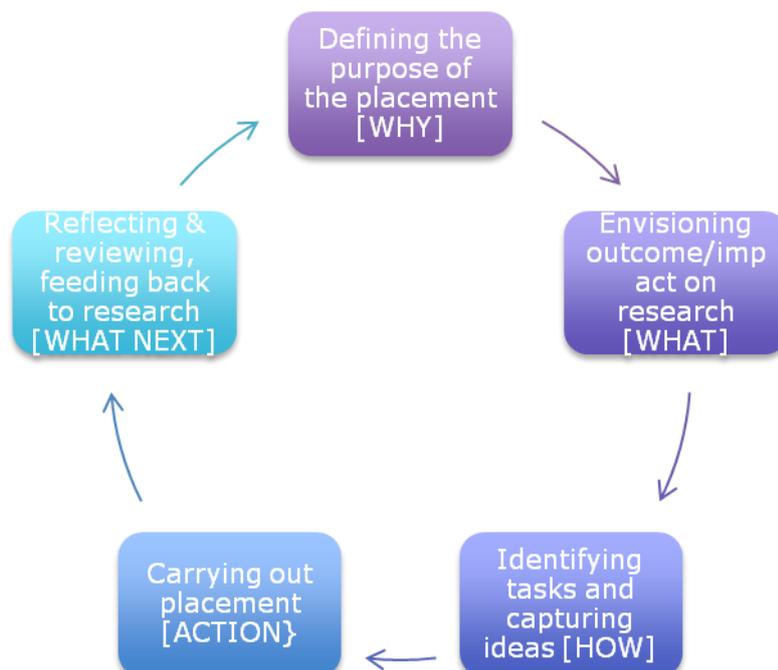
"During the secondment/placement, the secondee's expertise is applied to a project which meets a real organisational need. The secondee gains experience from working within a different organisational context, as well as the satisfaction of taking research into practice"

Research Councils UK (RCUK)



<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/kei/ktportal/Pages/PeopleExchange.aspx>

The diagram below shows how placements feed into the research process.



The skills and attributes you can develop by undertaking a placement activity are now recognised in the Vitae Researcher Development Framework or RDF (www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf). This new approach to researcher development outlines the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers, including a domain on engagement, influence and impact.

Vitae Researcher Development Framework

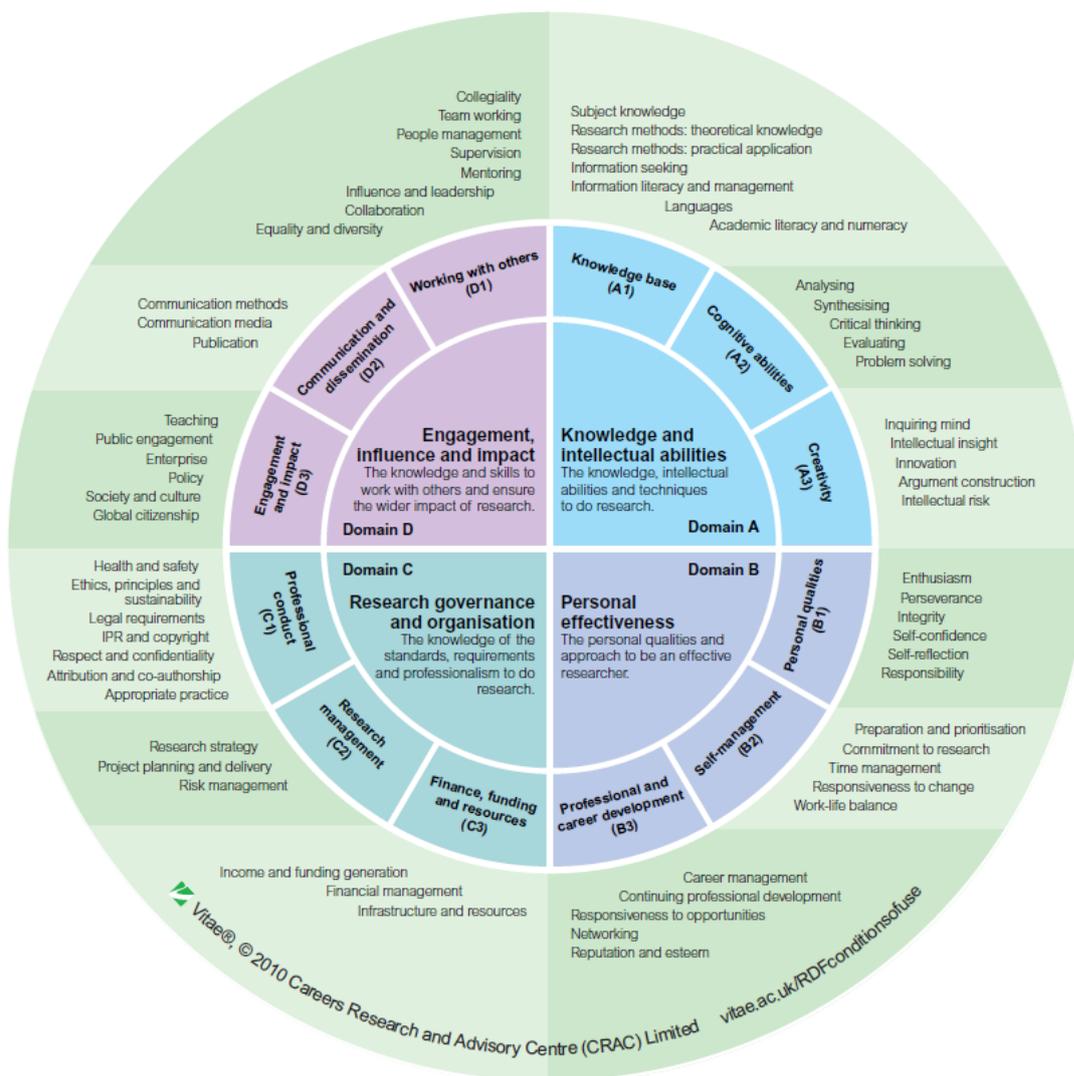


Image courtesy of Vitae®, © 2010 Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) Limited



Identify 5 skills from the outer circle of the RDF that you consider important to being an engaging researcher.

Which of these skills do you feel you are experienced in and which do you need to develop?

Working with cultural organisations

When thinking about research placements, there are two strategies to consider:

- Strategy 1: researchers may design their own placement, before approaching a cultural partner to develop it further.
- Strategy 2 involves first identifying which cultural organisation they would most like to work with and approaching them to work on designing a placement activity.



<http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how/guides/working-museums-libraries-archives>

Although primarily a public engagement resource, the NCCPE (National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement) has outlined the benefits of working with cultural organisations which apply equally to research placement activities. Museums, archives, libraries and other cultural venues make excellent partners when working on placement projects. They have a lot to offer and often have unique attributes which can enhance your experience of real-world research. They also have highly skilled staff who are eager to share knowledge and practice.

The benefits of working with cultural organisations include:

- They can provide access to collections, archives and materials.
- You can benefit from the support of staff who work there.
- They can provide knowledge and insight into different areas of expertise.
- They have strong community links and access to alternative methods.
- They have different organisational structures providing an excellent insight into different teams and organisational working.
- They often have clear frameworks for evaluating success. They can talk you through mechanisms for capturing data about your own activity.

But do remember:

- Make the most of the expertise of the staff and take their advice
- Respect the fact that the staff may have their own agendas with their own responsibilities and targets. Talk to your potential partner early in the planning to ensure that your placement activity ties into your partners' priorities.
- The timing of placement activities is just as crucial for cultural partners as it is for you – negotiate the timing of activities and agree on deadlines

Expectations of the placement process



There are many expectations associated with the placement process. Use this space to note down your expectations.

Expectations of myself?

Expectations of the process?

Expectations of the cultural organisation?

Expectations of the university?

Placements and public engagement – a match made in heaven?

Placements tie in very nicely with public engagement activities, with many researchers choosing to showcase what they have done on placement through coordinating a public engagement event or activity. Public engagement has many definitions depending on your research discipline. It can also be known by different names, for example knowledge exchange, public involvement, or participatory enquiry. Generally, most definitions involve the collaborative sharing of knowledge and experience between the researcher and the public, in partnership with cultural organisations. Public engagement is an excellent way to showcase the outcomes of a placement activity. For more information about Public Engagement please see the Researcher's Guide to Public Engagement.

“Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interactions and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit”

National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE)

Strategy 1 - designing a placement

On the page opposite is a template to design a research placement before approaching a cultural partner to take it forward. Here is some guidance on completing it. It is important to be as flexible as possible when formulating your ideas because they are bound to change once conversations with cultural partners begin. Nevertheless, an appreciation of what your placement might look like will help when making contact with organisations. Below are some examples of what you might put on the form:

Provide a brief description of research placement: here jot down a brief description of what you would like to do (bullet points will suffice). For example: My PhD is in museology, I would like to gain experience of working with museum collections and to identify how to increase young audience (16-18 year olds) engagement with museums. I would like the placement to culminate in a public engagement event which is designed to attract young adults to the museum for the day to increase their interest in natural history.

Experience/skills to develop - for example - to gain skills in collections and curation, experience of working in a museum setting, public engagement experience, communication skills and networking skills.

Resources/material/data required - visitor numbers, audience figures

Which organisation - The Manchester Museum

Timing/structure - 3 months - 1 day a week for 12 weeks

Outcomes/impact - Public Engagement event, increased visitor numbers amongst 16-18 year olds

Evaluation - questionnaire's, visitor figures

Uses for PhD - experience of working in a museum, career options, an appreciation of how my research can be applied in a museum setting

Strategy 1 – Designing a placement based on your research



As mentioned on page 8 and on the previous page, researchers may design their own research placement before approaching a cultural organisation to take it forward. Use this space to explore how you might go about designing a placement based on your research.

Brief description of research placement:

Experience / skills to develop:

Resources / materials / data required:

Which cultural organisation(s):

Timing / Structure:

Outcomes / Impact:

Strategies for Evaluation:

Uses for PhD:

Strategy 1 continued – Job Description & Person Specification

Another way of designing a placement based on your research, also part of strategy 1, is to come up with a job description and person specification which can be used when approaching a cultural partner. By effectively “creating” a job for yourself, it makes it easier for you and your cultural partner to work together.



The Perfect Placement

Use the space below, come up with a brief placement description and researcher specification for the placement you designed on page 11. The placement description should concisely describe the aims and outcomes of the placement, the timing and the purpose. The researcher specification should describe the skills, knowledge and attributes of the person who could fulfil that post. Please refer to the Vitae RDF for more help and information on this.

Placement title

Placement description

Researcher specification

Strategy 2 – Designing a placement activity with a cultural partner

As mentioned on page 8, an alternative strategy (especially for those researchers who are unsure about how to design a suitable placement) is to approach a cultural organisation to design a placement in partnership.



What do you need to think about when approaching a cultural organisation to design a placement in partnership?

Whilst placement design is important, it's also crucial to consider how the placement might work in practice. It's impossible to predict how the placement will pan out, but there are strategies you can put in place to ensure that you get the most out of the process.



Powerful questions – the placement health-check

Considering the following questions can ensure that your placement goes to plan

- Remain mindful of your goals – what do you want to achieve?
- Have you negotiated the timing and frequency of your placement project?
- What resources are you entitled to whilst working with your cultural partner?
- What are the cultural partner's expectations of you in the process?
- Who can you talk to if things go wrong?
- How can you ensure that you collect the right data?
- How will you reflect on the process?
- What does 'progress' with the project look like?
- What if you need more time?
- How will you bring the placement to a natural close?
- What will happen after the placement?

What is reflective practice? Why is it important?

Reflective practice is integral to the research process and applies equally to research placements. Reflecting on the placement process allows you to learn from your experience and apply the knowledge elsewhere. It also helps to clarify expectations, aims and objectives. The reflective process starts from day one from the placement design right through to evaluating activity and deciding where to go next (refer to the cycle on page 16).

The importance of reflective practice was outlined by Donald Schon in his book *The Reflective Practitioner* in 1983. Schon defined reflective practice as **the process of critically refining one's own craft or discipline through reflection**.

Schon's definition of the "reflective practitioner" suggests that it can be a professional characteristic, as well as a process. Schon made an important distinction within the reflective process – the distinction between **reflection in action** and **reflection on action**.

Reflection IN action can often be associated with the process of thinking on one's feet – the process of reflecting whilst in the situation itself, whilst having the experience.

Reflection ON action, however, is the process on reflecting after the experience. Both are integral to the research process.

Recently, Jennifer Moon has described reflective practice as **a mental process with purpose and/or outcome** (*Reflection in Learning & Professional Development*, 1999).

In a research placement context, reflective practice can help when reviewing progress, defending placement outcomes, reflecting on the experience and when responding to feedback and evaluation.

Reflective practice does take time – time needs to be factored in to the placement process in order to make sure that learning is documented appropriately. The advantages of reflective practice in research placements are many and varied:

- A better understanding of the motivations for doing research
- Developing self-awareness, including knowledge of strengths & weaknesses
- Gain insight into how to manage opportunities and threats
- Discover what affects performance and progress
- Develop insights and critical judgment
- Develop knowledge & critical voice
- Using feedback positively & constructively, get the most from supervision
- Enhance writing style (academic and otherwise)

Blogging is an excellent way to document progress in a research project. Reflection can take many forms and can be electronic or otherwise. Research journals can be written in notebooks, or on a blog, or using software such as MS Word. Mindmapping is also an excellent way of reflecting. Reflection can be public or private – but it is always personal. For examples of reflective work on placements please read the After-life blog: <http://www.heritageafterlife.com>.

Reflective models

There exist a large number of reflective models, most are accessible via a simple Google search. One of the best models is by Gibbs (1998).



Diagram adapted from Gibbs' model of reflective practice.



Recommended reading:

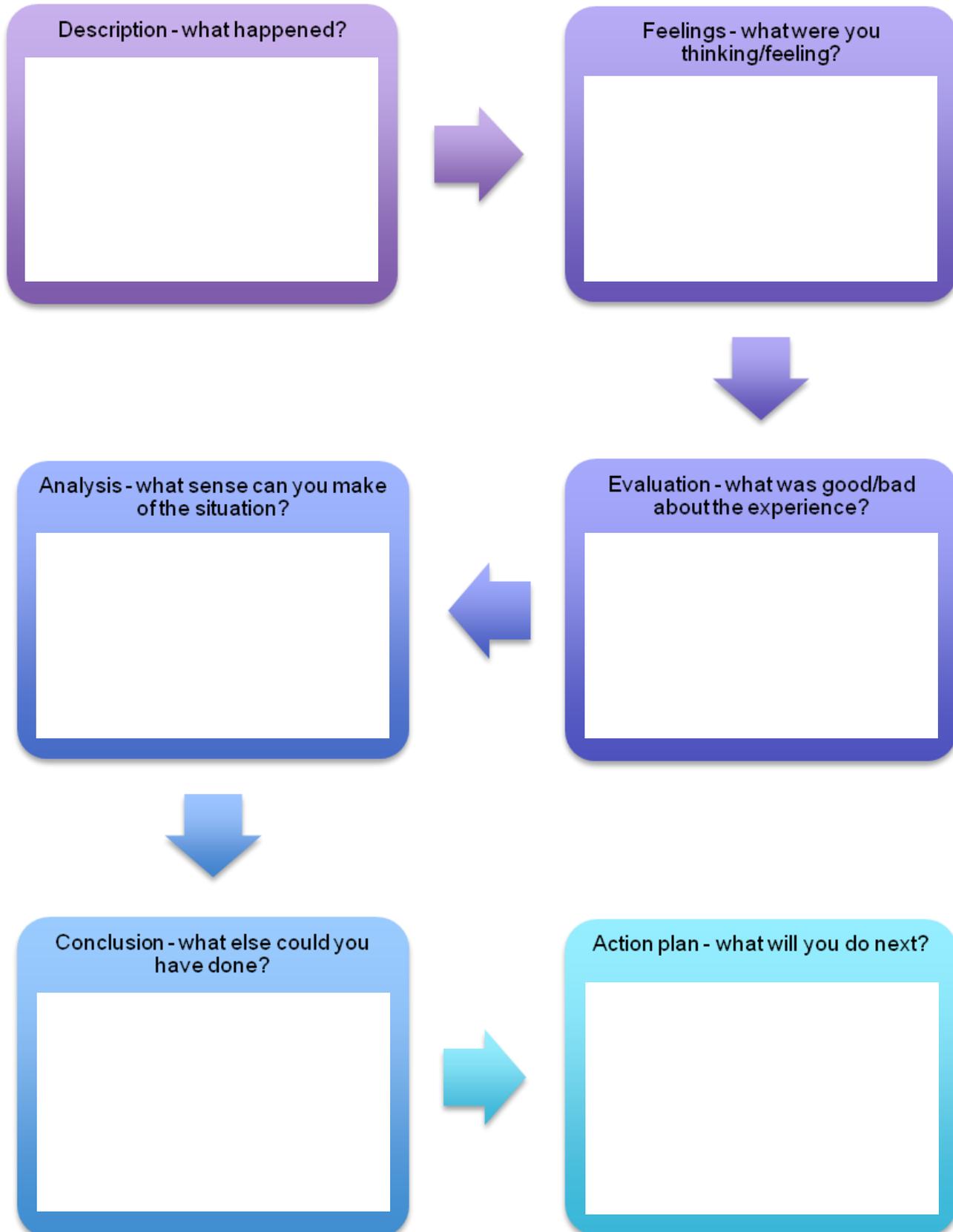
- Beech, Brockbank & McGill, *Reflective Learning in Practice* (2002)
- Bolton, G. *Reflective Practice: Writing & Professional Development* (2010)
- Hennessey, S. *Reflective Practice in Arts Education* (2006)
- Johns, C. *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner* (2000)
- Moon, J. *A Handbook of Reflective & Experiential Learning Theory & Practice* (2004)
- Schon, D. *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983)

Reflective models – continued



Structured Reflection using Gibbs' (1998) model

Use this space to reflect on specific stages of your placement project, and the process. The more regular the reflection, the better documented the experience and the greater the impact of the project on research and learning.





To Do / Next Actions

Use this space to identify the next actions for your placement activity e.g. research/contact cultural organisations and things to do.

Evaluating your placement activity

Whilst reflective practice is a form of evaluation, it's also worthwhile formally evaluating your placement activity, and sharing the results with your cultural partner and supervisor(s).



My Evaluation Plan

Use this space to identify the next actions for your placement activity e.g. research/contact cultural organisations and things to do.

Complete an evaluation plan for your placement activity using the following questions/headings:

- What do I want to achieve?
- What data collection techniques will you use?
- How will I analyse the data?
- How will you evaluate what you have done?
- How will you share the results?
- What are the next steps?
- Is there scope to continue/develop the project in the future?
- How can you feed back the information / experience to your research?
- How will you illicit feedback from the people you worked with?
- Is there publishable material here?
- How can you share your experience with other researchers?
- How will I report on my activity?
- Are there any showcase / public engagement opportunities to take part in?

Boosting your research profile through placement activity

A placement profile can really stand out in an academic (and non-academic!) CV. Many researchers are using Web 2.0 technologies (such as Wordpress and Twitter) to explore the impact of their research within, and beyond, the academy. Having a placement experience to talk about will set you apart from other researchers and provide a real-world narrative for what you are doing, which is an excellent way of getting involved in future public engagement activities.

Blog posts:

[Burning Bright](#) - Naomi Billingsley

[Lessons learned from preparing Research to Public events](#) - Kyra Pollitt



How will you integrate your placement into your research profile?

Case study

Working in the Rylands

Veronica Pizzarotti, PhD in Italian Studies, University of Manchester

“Doing an internship while you are doing your PhD is a great experience. Personally I would recommend it at any stage of your doctoral programme, because you will benefit from it in different ways. I had the opportunity to do it at the end, and I feel that has really opened up my mind in terms of possible career directions.”



During my time at the John Rylands Library I learned how to use their new Collection Management System and wrote narratives using the primary sources of my PhD project. This pilot project to assess the benefits for them of creating a repository of short descriptions of objects of the collections aimed at different audiences. They would like to use these descriptions in future exhibitions, to have overviews of the peculiarity of collection objects and to describe how these could be used by academics with their students.

The writing of narratives has helped me to hone and diversify my knowledge of special collection terminology, has prompted me to rethink about my research and the strong points of the books I have chosen as case studies. I adapted my frame of mind in a place where research is not just done for academia, but also for the public and its variety of segmentations. I have also honed my ability to self-reflect on my performances and to organize my work in a coherent way. Self-reflective practice has been very important as working with a new system meant I had to write reports with my impressions about it, and about its strong and weak points. These reports were then sent to my manager and then discussed in meetings. I really enjoyed linking my research to practical tasks and I will pursue this path further as I really enjoyed the processing and manipulation of research data for different needs and in the future I would like to further explore the links between academic research and information and knowledge management.

I loved the internship overall, but I just wonder how it would have been to have this experience earlier in my doctoral course, as doing it earlier might have lead my research in different directions. I had a really great support from the John Rylands Library and the Printed Books office staff, and I would advise every student who wants to do an internship to contact the cultural institution they want to work with well in advance, so to allow them enough time to plan how they could use their research expertise. This clear planning will lead to define clearly the purpose of the internship and mutual expectations and will lead to an extremely enriching experience.

All titles available in the series:

Researcher's guide to:

engagement

placements

enterprise

Cultural Partner's guide to:

placements

Researcher's Guide to placements

About the author

This guide has been written by **Dr Emily McIntosh** with helpful input from Suzanne Spicer and Dr. Kostas Arvanitis. Emily has worked in the field of Researcher Development for the last four and a half years and is interested in supporting researchers to embark on placements which will enhance their academic profile and employability. Emily was project coordinator on the Afterlife of Heritage Research project and worked with many researchers to help them design placements, including running the Research to Profession training workshops.

Contact

If you are interested in finding out more about placement and internship opportunities and training at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Manchester, please contact **Dr Louise Davies**, PGR Placements and Partnerships Officer, Louise.Davies-2@manchester.ac.uk.

ISBN:

The 'Afterlife of Heritage Research' Training Programme



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