

Ending a Placement

Objectives

This worksheet is designed to help you consider a number of issues that arise when ending a placement.

Relevance

This would be most relevant to those near or at the end of a placement

Specific Outcomes

Having undergone a process of understanding and planning the end of your placement.

Ending a placement might not be as straight forward as it may appear. When you start to approach the end of your placement, usually four weeks out, many students have found it useful to take a step back and reflect on the past few months. This worksheet is designed to guide you through that process of understanding when the right time to finish is, and what you might like to consider in trying ending a placement well.

What to consider

Ending a placement should be thought of as a transition in your relationship with the supervisor and organisation. Leaving on a positive note, even (and perhaps especially) if things haven't gone as well as you would have hoped for, is something you may want to aim for. As you approach the end of your time with the organisation, typically at the 200-hour mark, you may want to consider the following questions:

- What did you agree to do for the organisation?
- What did the organisation agree to do for you?
- Have you contributed to the organisation?
- Consider your timeline. How long will it take for you to complete or handover your remaining projects?
- Think about placement logistics. Do you need to get more supervision hours, conduct any reviews, or finalise paperwork?

Reflection and Reflective Practice

Whilst you should take on the role of the member of the team, it's important to always remember that a placement is an opportunity for you to learn. A structured process of reflection is simply a way for you to maximise your learning. At the end of each placement you are required to write a reflective essay, and to be honest, most students just pump out

“At first I thought that the end of placement review would be another onerous paperwork process. However, through the reflection process I was reminded of the tasks and activities I had successfully completed, I had become more aware of what I enjoyed about the placement experience and the associated learning and my confidence was reinforced.”
Masters Student

something without much consideration. If you can find the time however, there is a great opportunity for the reflection to be a powerful tool for you and your supervisor to make sense of this placement. It is usually through reflection where you begin to recognise the awesome professional you are becoming, and with that confidence, you can learn to take on more challenging placements. You may want to go through this structured reflection process (or develop your own) to help you in your daily or end of placement reflection. This has been developed from process observation and adult learning models.

Reflective Process

Focus on a specific event, task or experience.

1. What happened?
2. What were your emotional reactions (if applicable)? Why?
3. What are your thoughts or interpretations of the above?
4. Are there any theories, models, or concepts that can help you to make sense of the above?
5. Was the process, your response, or behaviour effective?
6. What would you do the next time/what would you do if you could relive the experience?

Typically, the first couple of times you go through this process, it may feel quite unnatural. However, as you get more practiced in separating the facts from your interpretation of the facts, and as you begin to apply the theories, frameworks and models from our discipline, you will find you get a lot out of reflecting on your experiences.

Some supervisors might refuse to sign paperwork that is more than two months old because they can't remember if what is written occurred.

Paperwork

It is often joked that there are actually four parts to our degree; thesis, coursework, placement and *paperwork*. On a different note though, the paperwork is something that needs to be taken very seriously. Some students have, at the end of their degree, found that they need to complete another placement as a result of poorly maintained paperwork. Staying up to date with paperwork may seem less important when trying to juggle the intensive mix of coursework, placement and research in this degree. But it can be overwhelming to try to reconstruct your day to day activities on a placement over a few months, if you leave it to the very end of your placement. Many students develop a system to manage their paperwork and keep electronic copies of everything. A good strategy is to reserve the last half-an-hour of each placement day to manage your paperwork and reflect on your experience.

Double Placements

Double placements are often excellent opportunities to gain an in depth experience you otherwise could not obtain. They are also great during those times when placement opportunities are relatively scarce. The first thing to acknowledge though is that there is an inherent power imbalance between you and your supervisor/organisation. This can sometimes make you feel obliged to continue with the organisation. It may be helpful to reflect on what you initially agreed to, what you hoped to learn and whether taking on extra hours in this organisation has costs in terms of preventing you from getting your desired depth or breadth of experience in other organisations. Remember, placements are primarily learning opportunities for you as a student. Just because it would be great for the organisation doesn't mean the organisation will be great for your learning. A good strategy is to let your supervisor know you'd like to sleep on any offer, and consult your fellow students and staff. The same formal contracting process you undertook for the first placement should be conducted for the second placement.

“Ending a placement when it hasn’t gone well is hard. But drawing on the wisdom and advice from fellow students in the degree, I was able to transform what could have been a very negative ending into something very positive. So my advice is, talk to the people around you.”
Doctoral Student

Final Tips

You might like to consider these final tips as well.

- How are you going to say goodbye to your supervisor and your team members? Some people like to leave with tokens such as gifts or cards.
- Try not to simply disappear from the organisation.
- Be open to the reflective process and integrate reflective practice. Use the process if you have experiences on placement that you are struggling to make sense of.
- Incorporate lessons learnt from this placement into your decision and planning when preparing for your next placement.

Conclusion

Ending a placement and *ending a placement well* are two very different things. We hope that this worksheet have given you the opportunity to think about how you might like to end a placement. Leaving on a positive note is something that takes quite a bit of effort, but will pay dividends for you in your career.