

Psychology with a Placement Year - what to expect

'Psychology With a Placement Year' is a four year programme allowing students to spend a year developing professional skills, gaining hands-on experience and testing potential career paths.

Contributed by Delene Adams, a Placement Year Student.

Here is what current students on placement have to say about their experiences, plus their top tips for future placement students.

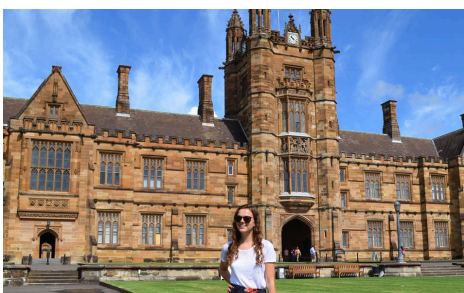


Delene Adams, Forensic Psychology Lab, the University of Sydney.

The Forensic Psychology Lab investigates issues related to the criminal justice system, including eyewitness memory, lie detection and the psychological effects of crime. This has introduced me to some fascinating research projects involving memory for repeated and stressful events (such as domestic violence), inattention blindness for crime and iWitnessed: an app to preserve eyewitness memory following crime.

My role on placement

One of the main things I have gained from my placement is a new found sense of independence. Not only does this come on a personal level with living in a different country, but also on a research level; I am lucky enough to have a supervisor who has allowed me to develop a research project around an area of my choice and be forward-thinking in all aspects of research design.



For this project, I have chosen to investigate the effects of reviewing police body-worn camera footage on memory for an event. I definitely did not imagine a placement year would give me the opportunity to record my own 360-degree video of a crime scene and run a project using virtual reality.

Besides this, I have presented in front of two research labs, discussed virtual reality at a volunteer training day and assisted with the Sydney Not Guilty Exoneration Project; a really exciting programme assessing cases of possible wrongful conviction.

Advice to future students?

Completing a placement year is a great opportunity to take the area of Psychology you love or know little about and learn in ways that aren't reading assigned textbooks or preparing for exams. As a bonus, you can gain a variety of skills to add to your CV or build on in your final year.

My advice for students thinking about where they might like to go on placement is that there really are no boundaries for where a background in Psychology will be useful so it's worth exploring what's out there. My advice for students just starting out with their placements is that it is more than okay to admit you do not know how to do something!



Lydia Davidson, Kent Clinical Neuropsychology Service.

This service works with individuals following a traumatic brain injury or those with a long term neurological condition. The team perform cognitive assessments to help identify any deficits alongside rehabilitation. Additionally, someone may come to the service to seek support whilst adapting to their new life.

"The key thing I have learnt on placement is that if you want to try something, just ask ... this is the best opportunity to dip your toes into something new without the commitment of years of training."

My role on placement

On placement I have been given the opportunity to shadow clinics and see how psychologists work, alongside conducting audits to help with service development. I feel that this placement has been really beneficial and is genuinely very interesting.

Advice to future students?

Doing a placement year has definitely taught me a lot about myself and a lot about how to apply Psychology in a real-world setting. It can be tough watching your friends continue their university degrees without you, but don't be afraid to try something new.

The key thing I have learnt on placement is that if you want to try something, just ask - the only thing they can say is no. This is the best opportunity to dip your toes into something new without the commitment of years of training.



Milly Salsbury, Psicon – Specialists in Clinical Psychology and Health Services.

PSICON is a private Psychology service comprised of six areas of support, spanning both adult and child services in Mental Health, Neurodevelopmental Lifespan support, Neurological Rehabilitation services and a Medico-Legal centre.

My role on placement

Prior to this placement, I thought that my main psychological interest was in the adult service, in mental health particularly. However, I have since gravitated towards child services, attending school observations and even carrying out my own assessments such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children during my Autism and ADHD visits. The often unpredictable nature of children has made this one of my favourite activities on placement.

I have also taken the opportunity to work in the paediatric unit of Medway Hospital once a week, engaging in therapy sessions for children with chronic illnesses. This, in turn, has provided me with the basis for a meaningful and, hopefully, useful Placement Year research project.

The service has provided me with endless opportunities to further my knowledge in Psychology, having attended training for a variety of psychological therapies, including CBT. In summary, I feel that the ability to transfer the knowledge learned within the lecture theatre to real-life clients and situations has been invaluable in confirming that the placement year and Psychology as a career is the right path for me.

Advice to future students?

The most vital piece of advice that I could give to a future placement student would be to throw yourself completely into this experience; the 30 or so weeks go by so quickly and you don't want to be left with feeling you could have done more. Reach out to people and create your own opportunities to really make the most of the time there. Lastly, if you're unsure what clinical work you can and cannot do, just ask!



Eszter Zsisku, Psychological Services, Great Ormond Street Hospital.

The neurodevelopmental department assesses children referred for complex neurodevelopmental profiles, most commonly for second opinions regarding autism or ADHD profiles. These children often have additional medical conditions which can confound with traditional autism diagnosis, so a multidisciplinary approach is used during assessments to capture all aspects of the child's profile.

My role on placement

I have greatly enjoyed being able to follow the treatment journeys of children who attend clinics or appointments. I particularly enjoy direct contact with patients, which includes writing observations during assessments and playing games or activities with children in breaks or whilst they wait for assessments. It's interesting to see the different behaviours and personalities of the children, as I haven't had much experience with children under 10 until now.

I've found my telephone skills have improved so much since starting the placement. I used to be terrified of picking up calls but now I feel I can come across as professional, even if I still get really nervous! I feel proud of the contributions I have made to the department, especially researching for and setting up a three-part workshop for a group of metabolic patients. Being a key part of the process from start to finish made me appreciate all the work that goes into interventions and workshop programmes, and has been an invaluable experience.

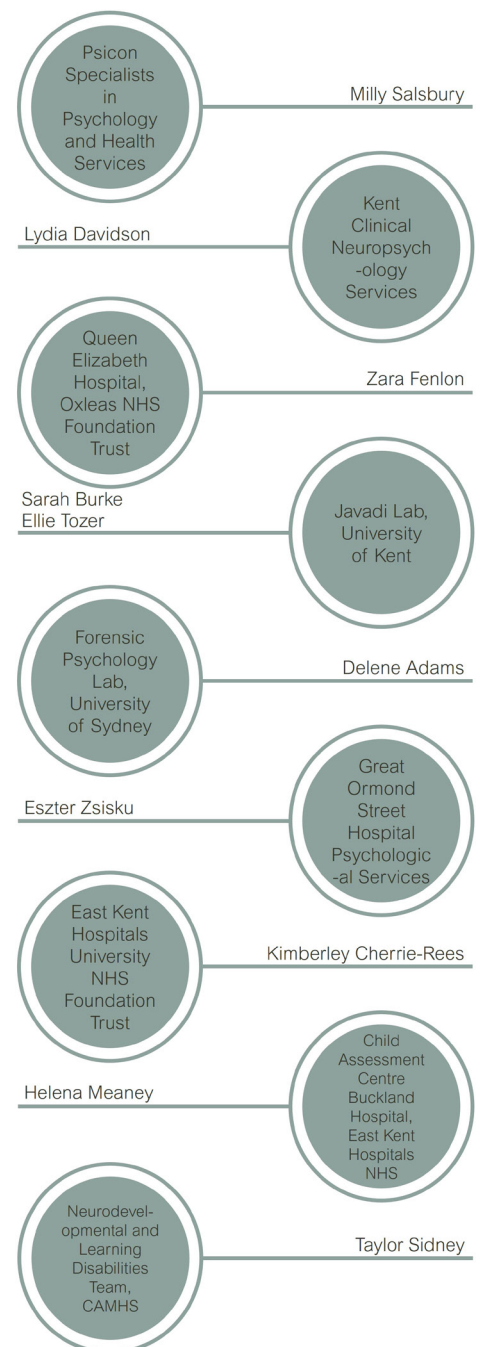
Advice to future students?

To appreciate and take full advantage of all the opportunities and experiences you get! This placement will probably be as important as your degree grade when interviewers are assessing you (one of my tasks had me sorting through applications, and experience was the most common reason applicants weren't invited for interview!)

The more you can say about what you've learned, the better your

application will look, so it's well worth making sure your reflective diary is up to date and includes all your key achievements.

Where did some of our placement year students go last year?



Questions about the placement year programme? Contact Katie Watson at psychapplied@kent.ac.uk.