# A GUIDE TO THE

# PLACEMENT PROGRAMME

1. INTRODUCTION

The Conservation Section, within the Department of Collection Care, is able to offer placements to students in the field of conservation. These exist to provide practical object-based experience by working alongside experienced staff. They do not form structured training courses. The Conservation Section specialises in the preservation of the collections of The British Museum (BM).

2. SCOPE

Practical experience is offered in all of the Section’s specialist areas:

The conservation of:

* ceramics, glass and cuneiform tablets
* metals
* organic materials (with a focus on wood, leather, etc.)
* organic materials (with a focus on textiles)
* Western prints and drawings
* East Asian paintings and prints
* mounting of works of art on paper
* facsimile
* stone, wall-paintings and mosaics
* preventive conservation

Type of placement:

Student placements (not funded by BM) are the only type of placement currently offered by the Conservation Section.

These combine a high proportion of hands-on practical experience gained through projects which reflect the needs and priorities of the Museum, with experience of working within a large national museum.

*Who is eligible?*

Students enrolled on recognised university (or similar) training courses specialising in conservation.

*Duration:*

Minimum of 8 weeks; 3 – 6 months is recommended.

*Aims:*

* To provide opportunities for students to extend and consolidate practical and professional skills through practical experience of working on objects within a team of professionals in the appropriate discipline(s).
* To provide an understanding and experience of the work context within a large National Museum.

3. ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA

The Conservation Section is able to provide a maximum of 12 student placements a year, provided that:

* There are sufficient resources in the relevant team to be able to offer supervision in the specialist field during the period requested.
* The type and range of work can be accommodated within the BM’s programme of work on its collections.
* The course currently attended is known to fulfil the requirements generally accepted for the profession.
* Contact details for a specific tutor are provided. The tutor will act as an academic guarantor, and a point of contact for academic matters.
* For overseas applicants, that evidence is provided to show how the placement is to be funded.
* Preference may be given where there are particular benefits to the BM of sharing expertise with a specific organisation or applicant.

Applicants must have:

* A good level of spoken and written English. Exceptions may be made in keeping with the BM’s International Strategy.
* Sound theoretical / academic knowledge within the field requested. The BM does not offer basic training in conservation.
* Some demonstrable practical experience within the specialist areas requested. The level needed may vary depending on the nature of the placement.
* The ability to work as part of a team and independently when required.
* The full support of their course leader.
* The right to reside and study in the UK for the duration of the placement.
  + Please note for international applicants: The British Museum is unable to act as a sponsor for visa applications. All applicants are fully responsible for arranging their travel to and from the United Kingdom for placements, including but not limited to all flights, transfers and other travel arrangements, travel and medical insurance, visas and accommodation and other living expenses, and shall be fully responsible for meeting all costs/legal responsibilities associated with the above. **The applicant must provide, before the Commencement Date, documentary evidence of a valid and appropriate travel and medical insurance policy covering the placement for the Term.**

4. CONTENT GUIDE

The content of any student placement will be determined by the specialist field(s) selected and the current workload within that team.

In general terms the BM will provide:

* A programme of practically based work, offering a range of experience which is appropriate to the level of skill, needs and interests of the individual as far as is possible within the constraints of the needs and priorities of the Museum.
* Agreement of the content of the placement in broad terms prior to commencement. A work plan will be confirmed within the first week of the placement and reviewed at three monthly intervals in the case of longer placements. Where appropriate this will include discussions with the student’s organisation.
* Opportunities to participate in the broader activities of the Departments, attend Department / Museum meetings, etc. in order to gain an understanding of the work context.
* Introduction to all aspects of health and safety relating to work the student may undertake in the museum; supply of all health and safety equipment they may need.
* A Mentor who will provide the main contact for the student, introducing them to the BM, providing regular feedback and evaluation.
* Specialist supervisor(s) who will undertake day-to-day supervision and guidance of the students’ work (this may or may not be the Mentor).
* Agreed time for study, leave, etc. depending on the length and nature of the placement.
* Access to the internet (within the conditions specified for BM staff).
* Access to BM libraries.

The student is expected to:

* Attend the Museum in line with other members of BM staff, (full time is 41 hrs per week, including lunch, unless specifically agreed otherwise).
* Undertake practical tasks of value to the care and understanding of the BM’s collections.
* Comply with all guidance and instructions on the same basis as a member of BM staff.
* Attend any training required.
* Demonstrate self-motivation and the ability to organise their work within the programme to meet deadlines.
* Be prepared to give an informal presentation on interesting aspect(s) of their previous work or experience.

The student’s organisation (university, museum, etc.) is expected to:

* Fully recommend the student for the student placement proposed. In some instances, the institution will be required to select the most appropriate student where more than one of their students wish to apply for a placement.
* Support the student during the course of the placement in all pastoral aspects of their well-being, especially in situations where problems are known to exist. **These must be brought to the BM’s attention prior to the student placement agreement.**
* Appoint a designated tutor who will provide regular contact with the student and the mentor / supervisor, where this is considered appropriate. This may take the form of a visit(s) or other forms of contact to be decided prior to commencement.

5. HOW TO APPLY

*When?*

There are two application deadlines each year:

Apply by 31 May for placements starting between October and March.

Apply by 30 November for placements starting April and September.

*How?*

Please complete and submit the Application Form which can be downloaded via a link on the student placement webpage.

You will also be required to supply:

* Your current curriculum vitae (CV), outlining your practical experience in the field for which you are applying (2 pages max.).
* A letter of recommendation from your course leader / employer.

If applying from outside the UK, please also include the following documents:

* A copy of your course curriculum.
* A copy of a valid student visa.
* Evidence of funding arrangements/stipends to cover living costs, insurance and other related costs (such as the Erasmus scheme, or other trust or benefactor).

Once complete, please submit these documents to:

**Placement Co-Ordinator**

**Conservation Section, Department of Collection Care**

[**conservation@britishmuseum.org**](mailto:conservation@britishmuseum.org)

**The British Museum**

**Great Russell Street**

**London**

**WC1B 3DG**

Your application will be considered by the Head of the specialist group responsible for the area you have requested, in consultation with appropriate specialist staff.

Where we think we will be able to offer you a student placement we would generally wish to hold an **informal interview** (in person or on-line) during which a match between your needs and those of the Museum will be sought.

If successful and the Conservation Section has the capacity to offer a placement in the period requested, a Placement Pack will be sent to you. You will receive a Student Agreement to sign and return, confirming arrangements. Any offer of a student placement is provisional until Security Clearance has been confirmed.

In the event that your application is unsuccessful you will receive a letter explaining our decision.

6. EVALUATION

Students may be asked to complete an evaluation of their experience of the placement. This is to provide a guide for the Conservation Section for developing and improving the experience we are able to offer.

The student’s Mentor will complete an evaluation of the student’s performance.

Where the student’s organisation (university, museum etc.) supply an evaluation / assessment form this will be used and returned to the organisation. Where no evaluation is requested by the student’s organisation an internal evaluation form will be completed for the BM’s records only.

Evaluation records will be kept as a confidential record by the BM for 3 years. The content of any evaluation will be discussed with the student at the close of the student placement.

*Statement of attendance*

A brief statement of attendance as a student at the BM can be supplied if required. This is not a reference and gives no indication of the quality of the work undertaken.

*References*

Requests for future references will be considered within 3 years of the placement. They should be directed to the Head of the Section in which the student placement was undertaken with a description of the post being applied for **BEFORE** the BM is given as a reference.