

Voluntary Experience as a Wedding or Event Planner

Please read this document in full before contacting The School for further information about placements.

The Process

If you are a **student or graduate of The Wedding Planner School** and would like to take up this unique opportunity, the available placements are detailed on our website (www.theweddingplannerschool.org.uk). Keep checking this to make sure you don't miss out on new placements.

If there is a placement that suits you both in date and location, you should call the school for further details.

You will be told to send in the application form and terms and conditions to the school along with a bank transfer, online payment or cheque as a contribution towards our employer's insurance policy. (This amount is shown on the application form and may vary depending on our insurers' changing fees, currently £55 for a single placement or £95 for multiple placements in a calendar year).

If you have your own public and employer's liability insurance cover there is no fee payable, however you will be required to send evidence of your insurance policy and must pay a £95 deposit to commit you to each placement. This will be refunded only on request within 3 months following the placement successfully being completed (or if the bride/supplier cancels the placement) or it will be lost if you pull out for any reason or do not claim in time.

Once received the placement is yours, and we send an email to the couple/lead planner to pass on your contact information. You will not be given her information in order to protect their privacy.

Please DO NOT...

- ...contact the school to ask how the process works or what the placement involves. This is explained here in as much detail as we can give at this stage.
- ...contact us to ask if there are any placements in your area. If there are they will be shown on the website and you must enquire only about the ones shown.
- ...say that you want to take the placement and then fail to submit your insurance contribution. This causes unnecessary delays for the couple.
- ...pull out of any arrangement under any circumstances. You WILL lose your entire 12-month insurance fee/commitment fee.



VOLUNTARY EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

Summary of the voluntary experience services we offer to couples and suppliers:

Free consultations – At any stage of the planning, a couple may benefit from an in-depth discussion with a graduate wedding planner about how the day will run, what still needs to be organised, inspiration for designs, and any other things that they would like to know about.

Free wedding co-ordination - Peace of mind for the couple on the wedding day, that all the little things will be taken care of, the schedule will run to plan and any problems will be sorted promptly. You, the graduate wedding planner will be as visible or invisible as the couple require and are expected to help out in any way apart from the following:

- Cooking or preparing food
- Serving food and drinks
- Childminding
- Driving guests or clients around
- Anything that involves lifting weights of more than 10kgs unless the load can be shared
- Other dangerous activities, or activities that you personally consider to be beyond your physical strength and endurance; or activities you recognise to be medium-risk or greater.

Free planning services – You may be able to assist brides & grooms who are stuck finding a supplier or venue and need some help with research. You can help them to find a full range of suppliers, point out the benefits and pitfalls of each and give them budget guidelines for planning their wedding.

Service available to wedding suppliers:

Shadowing Professional Wedding/Event Planners or Wedding Suppliers – Your chance to assist and shadow professional suppliers, learning all about the services they offer and what their role entails, while offering assistance on the day of the wedding. This is a good chance to build relationships and create contacts for your professional life and really getting to grips with aspects of the planning or coordination process from a professional perspective.

General information

You must refer to your handout and course notes, digital forms or other materials supplied during your course before and during the placement. You will not be supervised by WPS staff in person at any time on the placements unless specified so you must be confident to carry out your placement independently or alongside another graduate or professional. You will not be paid by the clients/suppliers, nor receive expenses, although it is not uncommon to be offered small tips, food and drinks which you are allowed to accept. If gifts are given, you should send a thank you card or email to the person who gave the gift and you may need to declare these on your tax return. As most placements require travel flexibility, we strongly advise that you hold a driving licence and have access to a car.

The placements that are available are shown on www.theweddingplannerschool.org.uk under 'work experience'. If there is one you would like to take, email the school to check it is still available, then return the application form with terms and conditions, to the school office. Once you have submitted your form and insurance payment (or a copy of your own insurance policy schedule and commitment fee) we will give your contact details to your selected couple or lead planner. **If the couple pulls out for any reason other than your fault, we will return your commitment fee/insurance fee (if this is your first and only placement so far) in full.** Please note that you are committed to taking placements once signed-up. **If you pull out of an arrangement, it lets down your client and us, and we cannot refund any of your insurance/commitment fee under any circumstances, including sickness, pregnancy & bereavement.** Please be certain that you wish to take part before applying.

We cannot guarantee that there will be a placement available in your area, but be willing to travel and you will find a placement. Please keep this information handy. **To apply, complete and return the forms on pages 6&7.**

Top Tips to make your Wedding Experience Placement a Success

Placements directly with couples (usually in pairs with another WPS graduate)

Look in your diary and double check what day of the week the placement is on **DON'T** assume it will always be on a weekend. Diarise the date(s) and keep it free, including the night before and the next day in case of travel.

The lead planner is the one who is main point of contact with the clients. The assistant helps the lead planner as required and should be copied into all emails.

Always try to have your first meeting with your couple at the venue (if there is one), if not then at their house but never have the first meeting over the phone unless the client is adamant. Use the client factfind paperwork only when you are doing planning (not just coordinating on the day) for the clients.

About 2 weeks before the wedding hold your final meeting (it may be your only meeting). Follow the pre-wedding coordination questionnaire (find it in your course materials). Use diagrams and pictures to help you with table layouts etc, but obviously if you think of any other questions or they are doing extra things, make sure you ask questions about everything so that you feel confident. Remember to use the questionnaire as a guide and prompt, let the clients do the talking.

You are FAR more knowledgeable than them about weddings in general, so they will be looking to you for confident advice, however they are experts on their own wedding, so ask lots of questions, and ask at each stage... "is there anything in particular you would like ME to be doing at this point?" If they're not sure then make a suggestion and use your initiative at the time.

Usually the timescales the bride and groom allow are a bit unrealistic, so try to flesh out a timeline while you are with them as you go through the questionnaire, you may identify gaps that need to be filled (photos & turnarounds) or time periods that need to be lengthened (e.g. travel time etc), and the meeting is the perfect time to discuss this and make suggestions to the B&G.

Remember to allow time in your timeline for travelling time and give yourself 15-30 minutes before the ceremony to get changed, wash and apply make up.

Be honest with the B&G, if they ask you to do something and you really don't think you will be able to, tell them in advance, it will keep you in good stead for the future. Honesty is the best policy.

Always type up your notes from your first meeting, send a copy to the couple and your assistant graduate and ask the clients to sign to confirm that you have understood everything correctly, plus to make any amendments where necessary. This covers you in the event that they didn't tell you to do something and are disappointed that you didn't do it.

If you are coordinating on the day then make sure you arrive with notes and schedule to hand. You should really know the schedule without needing to read it but always refer to it anyway. Don't get complacent.

Know exactly where you are going and allow a large time-contingency.

You should take digital high resolution photos of the event if time allows. Take many pictures of the flowers, table settings, venue, the guests and wedding party, the food and the drinks etc, as long as your photo-taking doesn't interfere with the wedding or your duties. You can keep the photos for your own use (the clients have agreed to this in their terms and conditions) but **only** on the proviso that a copy of the photographs is also sent to us here at the School too.

When the placement is complete, if you had your own insurance, you can roll over any refundable deposit to another placement you want to book on, or request a refund but it must be done within 3 months or it will be lost for good.

Shadowing a Supplier or Planning Professional

Look in your diary and double check what day of the week the placement is on **DON'T** assume it will always be on a weekend. Diarise the date(s) and keep it free, including the night before and the next day in case of travel.

Wait for your professional to contact you. They are probably very busy, therefore may not contact you until 2-3 weeks before the wedding/event. Do not hound them or ask us to chase unless there are fewer than 14 days to go.

Please follow their instructions keenly, but you may refuse to do anything you consider to be a health and safety breach as per the terms of voluntary experience.

Make a note of the professional's mobile number and email.

When the placement is complete, if you had your own insurance, you can roll over any refundable deposits to another placement you want to book on, or request a refund but it must be done within 3 months or it will be lost for good.

FAQ's – Voluntary Experience Placements

What should I do if I have received confirmation from the school but the 'client/professional planner' hasn't contacted me yet?

- Give the client at least two weeks before contacting us especially if the wedding is more than 6 months away or you are just doing on the day coordination. If after two weeks you haven't heard anything then please email us and we will re-contact the couple.

The basis of the shadowing placements is that you are to assist some very busy professional wedding planners on the day. Bearing in mind that each planner has a dozen or more placements with us each year and are working night and day for the whole spring/summer season, if you contact them beforehand with lists of questions they will stop taking part in this voluntary experience scheme as it is becomes a burden on their time. Therefore we only pass on your details to the planner AFTER you have committed to it and ask that you keep your questions to the absolute essentials (e.g. when and where), unless the planner chooses to communicate more.

How long is a wedding day coordination placement?

- Expect each placement to last from around 9am until 11pm unless told otherwise and it will involve tasks that crop up on the day, usually including some form of decorating, client and guests management. Some may involve setting up the day before or clearing up the day after, but this will be stated on the description so you should know already if this the case.

What will I be doing?

- On shadowing placements, the planner may issue you with a to-do list beforehand, but it is just as likely that she won't. Please see your handout from your course literature for a list of possible tasks for on-the-day coordination.

I need accommodation and help finding my way to the placement – can you help?

No, we expect you to take responsibility for researching these aspects yourself. The professional planners are not usually personally familiar with the immediate area of the wedding as they cover a large number of counties in their region so will be unable to advise. Therefore when looking for accommodation it is best that

you enquire at the venue when known, to see if they have room, or you can use the postcode to search on www.bedandbreakfast.co.uk or www.laterooms.com for something else nearby (reviews are available online).

What should I do if the 'client/professional' tells me she doesn't want me to volunteer on the event anymore and cancels?

- If the clients inform you that they no longer want you to assist with the event then please contact us right away. We will then be able to either refund your placement fee or you can choose another placement and we will roll over the fee without penalty. If the clients/professional have rejected you because they are not happy with your outcomes or you haven't made a very good impression, we will not refund your insurance fee.

What should I do if the 'clients' are rude to me or I find their event offensive?

- If the client is rude then you need to find out what it is that has caused them to lose respect for you by politely broaching the subject with them face to face. It may be that they don't trust your ability yet or it could just be that they are simply a bit insensitive to your emotions or even slightly autistic. There may also be cultural disparity between what seems rude to you and to them. Try not to take their comments or criticism personally, use it to help you develop a better style and recognise your areas for development.

- If you feel their event design is offensive to your beliefs and you absolutely cannot continue then please contact us straight away by email.

- We may give you advice or contact the client to see if something can be sorted out. Our decision as to whether you or the client is being unreasonable is final. If we find that your behaviour is the cause of the problem the placement will be cancelled and you will be instructed to follow cancellation procedure below. If we deem that the client has been unreasonable we will allow you to leave the placement or transfer without penalty.

What should I do if the clients are expecting me to do tasks I am not capable of or is far too copious for me to do unpaid?

- The key is prevention. Determine what is reasonable in your very first meeting. It is will be personal to you. Sit down with the client and tell them politely face to face what you are able to do and what would constitute extra work. Try to negotiate with them what is acceptable under the terms of the placement. If they want you to do more than 2-3 days worth of volunteering then they know they should be paying you for the excess time. They agreed to this when they signed their booking form. Do not hold negotiations by email, all discussion should be verbal and then followed up in writing afterwards.

What should I do if I need to cancel the placement?

- If you need to cancel your placement, then you need to tell the client verbally first, then follow it up with a letter of apology to the client. We take cancellations very seriously and you will be chased for outstanding fees by our appointed collectors. This is clearly explained in the terms and conditions which you will have signed to accept the placement. **ONLY** when the placement is successfully completed, if you had your own insurance, you can roll over any refundable deposits to another placement you want to book on, or request your refund but it must be done within 3 months or it will be lost for good.

TERMS & CONDITIONS & NON DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT FOR VOLUNTARY EXPERIENCE

- 1) All voluntary experience personnel are expected to follow the same rules as professional wedding planners in terms of conduct. It costs us a huge amount of time and money to instruct, administer and insure a voluntary experience candidate so we must ensure that you benefit from the experience.
- 2) You must adhere to any health & safety instructions given by your client, suppliers or supervisors and not endanger yourself or anyone else in the course of your activities. You should understand that all activities are at your own risk and should you not wish to partake in any activity for health & safety reasons you are under no obligation to do so. Some activities may have risk inherent and you must sign a further disclaimer in some cases in order to participate. The WPS accepts no responsibility for injury, loss or illness resulting from your participation in any experience activities.
- 3) While carrying out voluntary experience or shadowing you are effectively a representative of the Wedding Planner School (WPS) and must be presented immaculately at all times. You must not engage in any activities which would damage the activities or reputation of the school. These include but are not limited to: illegal activities, drunk or disorderly conduct, dangerous driving or any road-related offences (however minor), lewd or indecent acts.
- 4) You will not normally be entitled to wages or expenses, and you should not ask the clients for payment. However should a client offer gratuities, these may be accepted graciously and with thanks.
- 5) Any documents, information or contacts which you are privy to, or come across during your placement must not be copied, utilised or shared outside the WPS. Any suspected information theft or copyright breach will be dealt with by external legal authorities and can result in huge penalties.
- 6) These terms and conditions are applicable to any activity under the remit of the WPS or any other name that we or your supervisors operate under or alongside as contractors. In some cases, the experience placement will have been carefully negotiated with a couple, wedding supplier or supervisor and you should not do anything to negatively affect the operations of those people.
- 7) Once you have submitted your form and insurance fee (or insurance policy and commitment fee), we will give your contact details to your selected couple or supplier, as well as other WPS graduates participating in the placement with you. The submission of this form acts as permission from you for WPS to pass on your name, telephone numbers and email address to the couple, supplier, supervisor and other WPS graduates on the placement.
- 8) If the couple or supplier pulls out for any reason, we will return your insurance fee (if this is your first and only placement so far)/commitment fee (if applicable) in full. Please note that you are committed to taking placements once we have advertised in your area. ***If you pull out of an arrangement, it lets down any bride and groom, or supplier, that is interested, and we cannot refund any part of your insurance/commitment fee under any circumstances, including sickness, pregnancy & bereavement.***
- 9) You will be required to pay any insurance excess if you make a claim on the WPS insurance policy or your own personal insurance policies. The excess varies depending on the claim made.
- 10) All candidates must be 18 years of age or older or accompanied by their legal guardian who should sign below on the candidate's behalf.

YOU MUST BE LEGALLY PERMITTED TO WORK IN THE UK EVEN THOUGH THIS IS A VOLUNTARY PLACEMENT.

I confirm that I have read, understood and am happy to comply with the above terms and conditions of voluntary experience. Ignorance is no defence: If I maliciously or accidentally break these and any other conditions set, I may be subject to legal action and will be immediately forced to terminate any ties with the WPS and will receive no refund of my associated deposits or fees. I renounce any responsibility from the WPS with regards to my health and safety.

Signed _____ Name _____ Date _____
voluntary experience candidate

Agreed by _____ On behalf of WPS Date _____

Booking Form & Agreement for Experience Placements

Essential Information

Full Name	Date of Birth
	Student Number if known
Tel	Correspondence Address
Mobile	
Email	
Placement(s) of choice	Do you have your own transport? If so, please state what type of vehicle and how many seats:

You may provide any additional relevant information on the back of this form if you wish.

Booking Agreement

I wish to carry out the experience placement(s) given above and I am willing to take part in any aspect of the placement(s) as instructed by the couple or professional planner.

- I understand that the wedding day co-ordination placement means that I must be available from at least 4 hours before the ceremony until the end of the speeches, and that in most cases I will be required to operate alongside another volunteer.
- I understand that suggestions made by me in any client consultation or planning service may not be taken up by the client. I am responsible for agreeing how much time and work I am able to put in to planning with the client, early on in our relationship so to avoid misunderstanding further on.
- The Wedding Planner School will never be held responsible for the failure of any event suppliers to attend or perform. They are not liable for any payments to suppliers.
- I understand that the shadowing placement means that I must be available for the entire placement as directed by the professional. I understand that should I fail to be punctual on the day of my shadowing placement that the professional will carry on without me and my insurance/commitment contribution will be forfeited.
- Any changes I make to this booking will be in writing. Once agreed and my deposit or fee paid, I have a duty to the clients/professionals to fulfil the requirements to which I have committed myself.
- Any pictures taken by me whilst on placement are the property of The Wedding Planner School and must not be used without consent from the course co-ordinator (with the exception of voluntary experience with professional photographers, where photos may be taken on their behalf, in line with standard copyright law). A copy of all pictures and any testimonies will be sent to The Wedding Planner School by me on completion of the placement. Shadowing placements: I will only use images of other professionals' work with their written consent and only if the credit for the work of that professional is stated adjacent to the image e.g. 'Me assisting at a wedding coordination with (e.g.) *award winning planner Jane Smith.*'
- I have read and signed the accompanying Terms & Conditions and agree to adhere to them stringently.

Please tick one:

- I wish to be a temporary voluntary employee of WPS [I enclose/have paid £95 for multiple placements]
- I wish to be a temporary voluntary employee of WPS [I enclose/have paid £55 for a single placement]
- I have my own public liability insurance which covers the activities of a wedding planner and enclose my insurance policy schedule [I enclose/ have paid my £95 refundable commitment fee per placement] which I will forfeit if it is not claimed back within 3 months of completion.

I enclose the full fee required to reserve my placement.

GDPR compliance (please tick **both** boxes if you consent)

- I consent to my data being held for the purposes of informing you about and administering voluntary placements
- I consent to my name, email and phone number being shared with the couple/professional and my lead planner/assistant planner and WPS's employer's liability insurers and any person making a claim against me.

Signed.....

Date.....

Send this form to:
WPS, The Lodge, 23d Beulah Road,
Tunbridge Wells, TN1 2NS

admin@theweddingplannerschool.org.uk