> # FARMER
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> *F*orum for *A*rchives and *R*ecords *M*anagement *E*ducation and *R*esearch

Guidance to organisations providing work experience for those wishing apply for postgraduate training in archives and records management

Background and Purpose

At the end of 2002 the Society of Archivists' Education and Training Development Committee asked the Forum for Archives and Records Management Education and Research (FARMER) to supply guidelines for graduates planning to apply for any of the accredited courses in archives and records management in the UK. These guidelines (generally known as the FARMER guidelines) have been revised in line with current requirements and now exist in two versions, one for organisations and one for applicants

This guidance is relevant to organisations in all record keeping environments, and whether in archives or records management. It is neither prescriptive nor does compliance with it in any way ensure that those who have undertaken experience with an organisation following this guidance will be successful in their application. However it may be used as a benchmark by the universities providing accredited postgraduate education and training as a part of the process of assessing individual applications.[1]

Guidelines

Aim

To assist archives and records management services to provide appropriate work experience for potential applicants to postgraduate programmes in archives and records management.

Objectives

1. To supply broad outlines to host organisations seeking to provide appropriate experience for potential applicants.
2. To encourage a more consistent range of pre-course knowledge and experience in applicants to postgraduate programmes

Requirements

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[1] The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education subject benchmark statement for Librarianship and Information Management, which includes archives and records management, describes the required standards for the award of qualifications at undergraduate level and articulates the attributes and capabilities that those possessing such qualifications should attain. http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/benchmark/librarianship.pdf

Knowledge

It is expected that future professionals should take responsibility for developing their own knowledge of record keeping and therefore organisations should not try to coach would be applicants. However professionals in record keeping environments may wish to be aware that applicants will be expected to show their understanding of and be able to discuss the following:

- The importance and purpose of records management and archives management for society and individuals
- Current profile of record keeping within the public, higher education, commercial and specialist sectors
- Relationship of organisations with their users and other stakeholders
- Key archives/ records management organisations and associations
- Legislative and standards environments at a basic level
- Types of available employment in the domain
- Current professional issues and drivers

Experience

All courses expect applicants to have some pre-course record keeping experience in an appropriate environment. Many applicants will have up to a year's such experience: however it is less the *length* of experience than its *quality,* and the use the student makes of it which is important. FARMER does not wish to be prescriptive about the time spent on pre-course placements and recognises that visits and short-term experience can be used to great advantage by would-be applicants. However organisations providing longer periods of work experience (over 1 month in length), specifically targeted at potential applicants, should consider offering the following:

- Induction to the parent organisation and archives/records service
- Observation of how the service fulfils its mission on an annual and daily basis
- Participation in organisational/service functions (eg acquisition, preservation, access) and activities (eg filing, surveying, storage, retrieval, description)
- Interaction with client groups (external users, internal colleagues etc)
- Awareness of how the organisation publicises its activities
- Attendance at staff and user/client meetings

General transferable skills

Candidates for courses are unlikely to be accepted without the following attributes. The placement provider might therefore like to consider the potential of candidates for their own posts to demonstrate their capacity to:

- Apply for a Master's level degree (requires an undergraduate degree, usually at 2:1 level or above)
- Use basic computing skills (word processing, e-mail, spreadsheets, internet)
- Recognise the links between theory, practice and work experience
- Reflect critically on their own learning and experience
- Communicate in a clear, systematic and concise way both orally and in writing
- Structure an argument based on appropriate evidence
- Interact effectively with colleagues, users and other stakeholders
- Work in groups or teams as team member or leader