

## Transitions from higher education to work

A briefing paper prepared by Lee Harvey (Centre for Research and Evaluation, Sheffield Hallam University), with advice from ESECT and LTSN Generic Centre colleagues.

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### ***Volunteering***

Another form of external organised work-experience is voluntary work through [Community Service Volunteers](#), [Millennium Volunteers](#) or [Student Volunteering UK](#). There are about 25000 student volunteers across the UK working in community-based projects in over 180 further education and higher education volunteering groups.

[SVBangor](#), for example, is a student-led voluntary group based in the University of Wales, Bangor Students' Union that has been volunteering in the community for over 30 years. The [Sussex Coastal Highway](#) (University of Sussex, 2002), run by the University of Sussex Students' Union, is a voluntary programme that encourages local young people from non-traditional backgrounds to progress to higher education. The [Experience Works](#) project at the University of Glamorgan identifies opportunities for students to undertake [voluntary work experience](#) placements that are relevant to their career aspirations

As noted above, some institutions, such as **Napier**, Leicester, Sheffield Hallam and APU, provide a way to accredit voluntary working. However, most volunteering is not formally accredited but students use it to develop claims to employability and to explore different potential career paths.

The case studies of 'The Art of Crazy Paving' research project (Speakman, Drake and Hawkins, 2001) showed that volunteering promoted an organic learning process that honed continuing personal development planning and self-reflection.

Recent research amongst 200 of the UK's top businesses shows that three quarters of employers prefer to recruit candidates who have undertaken voluntary work experience and that over half think that voluntary work can be more valuable than paid work (Reed Executive, 2001).

*Guide for Busy Academics No.5. Enhancing student learning through voluntary work* (LTSN Generic Centre, 2001) briefly outlines the nature and advantages of volunteering and suggests a personal development plan template that could be used by students engaging in voluntary activities

