

Manifesto For Digital Arts Work Placements - Summary

Paid and unpaid work should not bleed into each other.

NEoN aims to keep paid and unpaid work separate. An opportunity is paid/unpaid for a reason, and when the lines between paid and unpaid work blur, problems arise where workers often try to make up for time by hugely overcompensating.

Volunteers are valuable and an integral part of creative arts.

NEoN is committed to providing a healthy and safe environment for volunteers to do as little or as much work as they would like to, with the full knowledge that they will not be financially compensated for their time. We have achieved the Volunteer Friendly Award with Volunteer Dundee.

For many people, volunteering is an important path to paid work.

Many people, especially young people, volunteer in order to gain skills and experience for paid employment. It is important for NEoN to actively promote the development of volunteers. The future of digital arts depends on actively training people to move into new roles, and to have people develop as digital artists, curators, and arts administrators.

Digital arts work placements should not be an exclusive club.

NEoN recognises that a long-term goal when setting up work placements is not to simply "create space" for marginalised groups - the long-term goal is to dismantle all forms of discrimination and systemic oppression that hold marginalised groups back from thriving in the industry. Digital arts should be open to all, and therefore open to be shaped by all.

Reach out everywhere: people need digital arts everywhere.

NEoN and other organisations must do the work of community outreach when looking to fill placement positions. It is best practice to provide opportunities in digital arts to as many people as possible, especially to people who may not be aware of digital arts at first, but then find that it's something of interest to them.

Pay people wherever possible.

NEoN aims to pay people for their labour wherever possible. Paying people at every stage of their career is not only best practice, but also sets realistic expectations for how people should be compensated for their labour in the future.

We are all gaining new skills as we go.

NEoN aims to provide clear specifications for all work. People who apply to work placements and/or volunteer with NEoN will have different levels of experience, and they should be given the relevant mentoring, tools and knowledge to do the job they have been selected for. Learning on the job is expected in the digital arts sector. There isn't a binary switch between "qualified" and "unqualified."

Support is key to comfort and success in a placement.

Feeling supported in a work environment and in work contexts is hugely important. NEoN commits itself to providing support and adjustments to the best of our ability. In our mission to widen access to the industry, we are conscious that different people need different things in order to feel comfortable in a work environment. It can be difficult to ask for help due to the nature of creative work and the "but art is fun!!!!" idea, and when people are under the constant pressure of "am I doing this right?" that consumes time and energy that they should not have to be expending.

Tailor internships and other placements to Graduate Attributes.

NEoN aims to make experience gained from placements and volunteering as applicable to future employment as possible. This involves making internship specifications clear, including as to why the work is needed within the organisation. If we tailor the placements we offer to be strongly applicable to future employment of graduates, this will help prepare future generations for the digital arts industry.

Digital arts work can be fun and fulfilling, but it is still labour.

Digital arts is often framed through the lens of relaxation and entertainment, and arts workers are forgotten about. As fun as digital arts work can be sometimes, it is not "free time," and NEoN aims to reflect this in our treatment of interns and volunteers alike. The enjoyment or perceived proximity to relaxation of an arts job never justifies a lower wage, or less support for volunteers.

Rest is a human right.

The assumed proximity of creative work to relaxation can mean the line between work and non-work gets easily blurred. People are entitled to “true rest time.” NEO is committed to upholding realistic expectations of work placements and volunteering. A person’s mental and physical health always comes before the work they do.

Manifesto Credits

Thank you for reading the Manifesto for Digital Arts Work Placements. The Manifesto was created by Beatrix Livesey-Stephens (me), who was commissioned by NEO and supervised by Donna Holford-Lovell and Dr Michael Johnson. The Manifesto was made in Twine v2.3.14 with Harlowe 3.2.2.

The Manifesto is a living policy document that is subject to grow and change, acting as an adaptable knowledge repository. The Manifesto was hugely informed by my own experience of work placements, but you can see other sources and suggested reading below.

The interviews I conducted as part of gathering knowledge for the Manifesto were invaluable. I would like to thank James Morwood, Sabrina Logan and [Ailie Rutherford](#) from NEO, and Sara Khan and Daz Skubich from [Game Assist](#). I would also like to thank [Saoirse Amira Anis](#) for her guidance and support.

Sources & Suggested Reading

[Disenchanted Chinese Youth Join a Mass Movement to 'Lie Flat' - Insider](#)

[Statements Towards The Establishment of a Proof-of-Rest Protocol - Emilie Reed](#)

[Surely, it's not that hard? - Saoirse Amira Anis](#)

[The Sound of the Future | Capitalism, Alienation, and Disability in Project DIVA: Future Tone - Game Assist](#)

[why entry level jobs aren't entry level - Answer in Progress](#)