

## YEAR ON PLACEMENT

**Name:** Dan Hughes  
**Company:** Lidl GB  
**Role:** Retail Placement Student



**“...My placement was an enriching experience that equipped me with practical skills, preparing me to excel in my future career”**

### Why did you decide to do a placement?

I chose to undertake a placement year during my university studies primarily because I recognised the invaluable benefits it offers in terms of gaining practical work experience before graduation.

In today's competitive graduate market standing out to potential employers is crucial. A placement year not only allowed me to apply what I've learned academically but also demonstrates to companies that I am proactive, adaptable, and capable of contributing effectively in a professional setting. This firsthand experience not only strengthens my CV but also provides me with insights into industry practices and trends that will be invaluable as I transition from university into my career.

Ultimately, the decision to pursue a placement year is driven by my desire to maximise my employability and ensure that I am well-prepared to thrive in the job market upon completing my degree.

### Can you tell us a bit more about the organisation, your role, and the skills you learned?

I completed my placement year at Lidl GB, the leading, fastest growing super-market chain in the UK. Lidl GB is part of the larger Schwarz Group, the 4th largest retailer in the world and as a group had an annual turnover \$167.2 billion in 2023!

My role as a Retail Placement Student encompassed various responsibilities that provided a comprehensive understanding of the retail business. I was involved in store and warehouse operations, supply chain practices, HR and recruitment services and many other additional departments. Further, I had the chance to work on strategic projects which implemented a new recruitment practice to enhance efficiency and reduce costs within the business.

Throughout the placement, I developed a multitude of valuable skills. My analytical skills were honed through data-driven decision-making and performance analysis. Effective communication and teamwork were crucial as I collaborated with diverse teams across different departments, my problem-solving abilities were challenged by addressing operational issues and devising innovative solutions to these tasks. The most important however was that of my leadership skills. The opportunity to lead and manage a team whilst still at university is an invaluable skill and experience to have that behind me has given me so much confidence moving forward. Overall, my placement at Lidl GB was an enriching experience that equipped me with practical skills and a deep understanding of the retail industry, preparing me to excel in my future career.

### How did you find the transition back to UEA and your final year more generally?

The transition back to UEA and into my final year was smooth and rewarding. The practical experience I gained during my placement year at Lidl GB gave me a new perspective to university studies. I came back feeling more confident and focused, with a clearer understanding of how my studies applied to real-world scenarios. This experience also enriched my contributions to class discussions and group work, ultimately making my final year both productive and fulfilling.

### What are your plans after graduation?

Following on from my placement year after graduation I am thrilled to continue my career with Lidl GB, having secured a place in their highly competitive graduate scheme. This opportunity will allow me to build on the skills and experience I gained during my placement year, diving deeper into retail management and strategic operations. I am excited to contribute to Lidl GB's continued success and growth as the largest growing supermarket chain in the UK, whilst also further developing my leadership and business acumen.

### What advice would you offer to students looking for a placement?

My advice to students looking for a placement is to apply for as many opportunities as possible. Personally, I applied for at least 60 positions before securing my placement. It's important to work hard and stay persistent because placement schemes are highly competitive. Don't be afraid to take any opportunity that comes your way. I initially didn't envision myself in a retail role, but I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Lidl GB and it has led me to a fantastic role after graduation. Keep an open mind and be prepared to seize any opportunity, as it can lead to unexpected and rewarding career paths.

