

Conference Assistant (Summer 2024)

OVERVIEW	
Job title:	Conference Assistant
Responsible to:	Conference & Events Manager, Residential Business Manager
Responsible for:	N/A
Working alongside:	Conference Assistants and Operational teams
Salary:	National minimum wage + 15% holiday pay Free accommodation in College and some meals during events worked
Contract type:	Fixed-term 24 June–28 September 2024 Zero hours contract
Working arrangements:	Required to work from St. John's College, flexibly
Pension:	N/A
Holidays:	N/A – holiday allowance paid in monthly salary
Start date:	24 June 2024
Closing date:	14 May 2024 (23:59)
Interview date:	22 May (am)

ABOUT ST JOHN'S COLLEGE

St John's College is one of the smallest Durham colleges, renowned for our welcoming atmosphere. Founded in 1909 and set in a series of beautiful, listed buildings in the heart of Durham city, our community enjoys stunning views of Durham Cathedral and boasts gardens and lawns stretching down to the River Wear. Each year we have around 250 students resident in the College – undergraduates and postgraduates studying for degrees at Durham University, as well as students of Cranmer Hall, a theological College within St John's. The College has a degree of independence within the University, both financially and in its governance, meaning that we have the freedom to do things a little differently. Throughout the year, the College's Christian ethos translates into warm hospitality. All our different staff teams work closely together with our students to create the unique John's experience.

JOB SUMMARY AND PURPOSE

During the summer vacation period, Conference Assistants, typically two in number, reside and work within St John's College. Their primary duty is to provide customer, logistical, and administrative support for commercial activities such as conferences, events, and bed-and-breakfast services. They operate under the guidance of the Conference & Events Manager and the Residential Business Manager.

This hands-on role entails involvement in all aspects of event execution, from room setup to day-to-day management. It requires individuals with exceptional organizational skills and a dedication to delivering outstanding user experiences through superior customer service and meticulous attention to detail. Working collaboratively within a dedicated team, Conference Assistants ensure that events meet the highest standards.



Responsibilities are diverse and encompass tasks such as assisting the Events Manager with event logistics and execution, including providing exemplary on-the-day support, welcoming guests upon arrival, coordinating room setups according to client specifications, managing conference facilities, overseeing the College Bar operations including serving, inventory management, and procurement, assisting with meal service, handling bed-and-breakfast bookings, and managing a shared email inbox.

Work hours and schedules fluctuate significantly throughout the summer, occasionally changing on short notice. Conference Assistants are considered members of the College staff. There may be instances where their staff responsibilities take precedence over their student commitments within the community.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Customer service

- Work from the Reception helpdesk in College to provide frontline customer services to external guests, working to agreed procedures and as part of a wider team.
- Provide a warm, responsive and professional service to customers and guests, acting as the first point of contact for queries and issues, signposting and escalating to relevant staff as required.
- Respond to queries and record information systematically in accordance with procedures and escalating more specialist and complex queries or issues to more experienced team members.

Events management and support

- Work with college staff across all departments to support the organisation and delivery of commercial and College events, including conferences, graduation dinners and alumni reunions.
- Assist the Catering Team in the preparation of rooms and set up of tables, also serving at meals when required
- Set up meeting rooms including AV equipment and manual handling (training will be provided)
- Manage the College Bar, including working on designated nights, and liaising with the Chef Manager regarding Bar stock and pricing.

Administration

- Liaise with Reception and other operational teams and staff members to ensure B&B and event bookings and queries are processed as per procedures.

Training

- Undertake mandatory in house and online training within the first two weeks of employment, including but not limited to:
- Manual handling
- Internal IT Systems (Including SharePoint / Team and Outlook)
- Fire Warden Training
- AV equipment set up
- Customer Service training
- GDPR and information security training.



Other

- Be resident in College throughout the full contract period, and be available to provide cover at short notice and out of hours, including occasional late nights and early mornings (after 23.00 and before 08.00)
- Maintain awareness of and compliance with relevant University and College policies, regulations and procedures
- Undertake such other voluntary duties as may reasonably be agreed with the Conference & Events Manager and Residential Business Manager.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

The successful candidates will be friendly and motivated individuals with a passion to represent St John's College and to provide excellent service to external guests and customers. They will need to have a flexible approach to work during this period and be available at short notice to provide cover and support.

	Criteria	Essential	Desirable
1	Excellent interpersonal skills	x	
2	Strong written and oral communication skills	x	
3	Strong organisational and administrative skills with attention to detail and ability to plan ahead	x	
4	Confident with all Microsoft Office applications, including SharePoint and Outlook	x	
5	Ability to work efficiently both independently and as part of a team	x	
6	Strong customer focus	x	
7	Flexible approach to work	x	
8	Displays a smart and professional appearance, representing the College in a positive manner	x	
9	Ability to handle difficult situations using initiative and problem-solving skills		x
10	Experience in customer service		x
11	Experience in managing AV equipment		X
12	Experience in bar management		X
13	Experience working in catering		X
14	Experience in representing the College externally		X

This role is subject to the successful applicant providing proof of eligibility to work in the UK.



APPLICATION PROCESS

The application should include:

- Letter of application
- Current CV
- Names and contact details of two referees

Applications should be submitted by email to Conference & Events Manager, Elizabeth Hall
(elizabeth.hall3@durham.ac.uk)

The deadline for applications is 14 May 2024 (23:59). Interviews are expected to be held on the morning of 22 May.