

# Guidance on Placements

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance has been introduced to support the University's Policy on Placements. It is primarily designed for staff supporting students in learning, although students may find it a useful resource.

## 2. Approving placements

### **Background checks on placements arranged by the University**

- 2.1 Some placement providers, particularly in Health and Education, are selected by the University, and the University has a duty to ensure that the providers are suitable as hosts for University students. Typically, checks might involve some or all of the following on a periodic basis:
- Visits to the provider prior to making an arrangement
  - Checking the outcome of statutory reports (e.g. Ofsted, CQC)
  - Checking the provider's history of hosting placement students
  - Identifying how the provider will support students on placement
  - Undertaking a risk assessment
  - Checking the provider's Health and Safety policies and procedures
  - Checking that the provider has the appropriate Insurance in place
- 2.2 Schools and individual programme teams should work out an appropriate method for running background checks which is proportionate to the size and profile of the placement provider, the number of students it will be hosting, and the time the students will spend on placement. Schools should maintain a comprehensive record of checks undertaken, which is available for scrutiny if required.

#### *Example*

*In the School of Health Sciences, practice placement providers are visited every three years on a rolling basis.*

## Background checks on placements sourced by students

2.3 When a student self-sources a placement, the University still has a duty to ensure that the placement provider is suitable as a host for the student and is providing an appropriate level of placement. Typically, checks might involve some or all the following steps:

- Checking the student's job description and employment contract
- Checking the background information for the provider and its status in its industry or setting (e.g. checking Companies House for UK based placements)
- Visiting the provider
- Asking the provider for details of its placement schemes, and other institutions it has worked with
- Identifying how the provider will support students on placement
- Undertaking a risk assessment
- Checking the provider's Health and Safety policies and procedures
- Checking that the provider has the appropriate Insurance in place

### *Example*

*The Southampton Business School sends a letter to each employer once a student has secured a placement which sets out the employer's responsibilities. The letter also asks the employer to complete an online form which collects information on the employer's health and safety and insurance arrangements. If the employer does not complete this or refuses, then the placement will not be approved.*

*The Year in Employment Placement Team check that the Placement Provider has Employer Liability Insurance in place to cover the student placement.*

## Individuals in charge of placement activities

2.4 There should be designated individuals who are responsible for overseeing placement activity in each School<sup>1</sup>. These should act as link contacts with students, placement providers, and the University. They are welcome to attend the University's Placement Forum.

---

<sup>1</sup> Year in Employment (YIE) placements are managed by the Work Experience Team in the Careers and Employability Service rather than a School. This guidance also applies to YIE placements.

### **3. Supporting students prior to going on placement**

#### **Student briefing**

- 3.1 Before students go on placement, they should undertake some form of mandatory briefing or training provided by the University. Depending on the type of work placement, it might consist of:
- A non-credit bearing module
  - A lunchtime seminar
  - An online programme
  - A series of drop in placement training sessions
- 3.2 The University's *Policy on Placements (Section 4)* details the areas that students should be briefed on prior to commencing their placement.
- 3.3 It is also useful to have students who have successfully completed placements to meet with students intending to go on placement.

#### **Agreement**

- 3.4 Some Schools have standard letters that are sent to placement providers that set out expectations and standards. Where more formal legal agreements are required, Schools should liaise with Legal Services.

#### **Student Handbook Template**

- 3.5 It is recommended that all students going on placement have a form of handbook with information relevant to their placement activity. The detail of the student handbook will vary according to the type of placement. Examples of content include:
- How to apply for a placement and how to accept an offer
  - Health and Safety information
  - A student's obligations to the University whilst on placement
  - A student's obligations to the placement provider including data protection and confidentiality
  - Expected standards of student behaviour and professionalism
  - Details of placement learning outcomes and assessment requirements

- Details of the consequences of failure to complete the placement and how this may affect progression on the programme
- What support a student can expect from the University whilst on placement (for example, from the Library or Student Support Services)
- Details of the contact the student should expect with the University of Southampton during their time on placement
- How to contact a student's supervisor
- Information about what to do in an emergency
- What access to Disabled Students' Allowance a student may be entitled to whilst on placement.
- Information on financial matters (e.g. Student Loans, Student Fees, Income Tax and National Insurance)
- Information for international students including visa requirements
- Information for students considering overseas placements
- What preparations a student should make for their next year of study (for example, how to seek guidance in choosing final year options, or choice of dissertation topic).

### **Student Visa implications**

- 3.6 There are specific implications around placement activity for students who have a Student Visa. Students should be made aware that they are responsible for ensuring that any conditions connected with their Student Visa (for international students) have been met. Students should be referred to the University's Visa and Immigration Student Advice Service for further support and guidance.

### **Liaising with employers**

- 3.7 Although in most cases, the main relationship with the placement provider in this type of placement is in the form of an employment contract between the student and the employer, it is reasonable to expect that the University makes some contact with the employer during the course of the placement. This can include an initial introductory letter from the University to the employer, and, if appropriate, contact with the student's supervisor.

- 3.8 It is good practice to provide a handbook, website, or other information for Employers, which guides employers through the expectations the University has of students on placements.

*Examples*

- The School of Health Sciences provides Information for Practice Supervisors, Practice Assessors and Academic Assessors on its [Practice Learning Blackboard Site](#).
- The Southampton Business School provides an Employer Handbook

## **4. Supporting students whilst on placement**

### **Emergencies**

- 4.1 All students should be given information about what to do in an emergency. This information should be communicated in the risk assessment, covered at the briefing prior to the student going on placement and included in the Student Handbook. Students who face an emergency situation in the course of their placement (i.e. during the working day) will be covered by their employer's emergency protocols. However, it is important that students make contact with the University as soon as possible in an emergency situation, particularly if it is likely to have long term impact on the placement (see 'What happens if a placement goes wrong?'). Students should be encouraged to keep their student card with them, as it contains contact information for the University on the reverse.

### **What happens if a placement goes wrong?**

- 4.2 Sometimes a time on placement can go wrong for a number of reasons including:
- a student has an illness
  - the placement provider is no longer able to host the placement
  - the placement becomes unsuitable for a student.
  - inappropriate behaviour/gross misconduct by a student
- 4.3 Depending on the type of problem on a placement, different support mechanisms should be put in place. If possible, the student should be encouraged and supported to stay in the placement, or one found at an alternative placement provider, in order to complete the required number of

weeks of placement activity and meet the learning outcomes of their placement.

4.4 If the student is unable to complete the required length of placement, this can have important consequences on their academic programme. This may include:

- Failure to meet the required learning outcomes of the programme (there should be a discussion on whether referral or repeat years are an option or whether the student can transfer to a similar programme, or whether Special Consideration Regulations can be applied in this case).
- Suspension from their academic programme (as they are no longer completing work on the programme). This can have important consequences for student loan funding.
- Major implications for international students with Student Visas. Advice should be sought from the University's Visa and Immigration Student Advice Service before guidance is given to students who are on a Student Visa.
- Consequences for the student's ability to meet the outcomes required by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body.

4.5 Discussion should take place with the Director of Programmes, Deputy Head of School (Education) and Head of Faculty Student Administration to ascertain the best advice to give to the student. For Year in Employment placements the appropriate action should be discussed and agreed by the Board of Studies. Support for the student's wellbeing can be accessed through contacting the Student Hub and asking for Student Wellbeing team. Student Wellbeing can provide dedicated support where required to support the student's mental wellbeing if they need to stop the placement or to support them to continue in the placement.

### **Staying in contact**

4.6 Regular contact with the student is recommended throughout the course of their placement. Faculties should set clear expectations for the type and frequency of contact, depending on the type and length of placement. The minimum expectation from the University is at least one formal contact per

semester. The best practice is to ensure that the student receives at least one site visit during the period of their placement, supported by regular email, telephone or video call conversations.

#### 4.7 Contact with students can take the form of:

- Regular email communication between the student and a placement coordinator.
- Planned video call conversations between the student and a placement coordinator in the student's Department.
- Communication with the student's Personal Academic Tutor.
- A campus-based day conference, where students are invited back to University for a day.

#### *Example*

*- All placement providers in the MChem Chemistry with a year long placement are visited during the course of their placement year.*

### **Reasonable Adjustments to the Workplace**

4.8 If a student has met with a specialist practitioner from the Student Disability and Inclusion team, they may have had a preliminary conversation about their condition and what adjustments need to be made of their study at the University. This will have been recorded on the student's Student Support Recommendations (SSR) and shared with the relevant placement officer. Depending on the student's individual circumstances, it is expected for the student and the placement officer to have a further meeting to discuss the reasonable adjustment recommendations that could apply to placements and to complete the mandatory risk assessment together.

4.9 If a student discloses a disability but does not have an SSR or has not previously met with the Student Disability team, the placement officer should continue to complete the risk assessment to the best of their ability and signpost the student to the Student Disability team for an appointment with a specialist practitioner to discuss adjustments for their study at the University.

## **Record Keeping**

4.10 The University Placement Management System 'InPlace' should be used to record the details of all students on placement. Information held on the student should include:

- Student contact details when on placement (bearing in mind these are likely to be different to either their home or term time contact information).
- The name and address of the student's placement provider.
- The expected start and end date of the student's placement.
- The name, job title, and contact details of the student's supervisor or line manager on placement.

4.11 Relevant fields should be updated on Banner to note the student is on placement.

## **5. Assessment and Achievement of Placement Learning**

### **Learning Outcomes/Credits**

5.1 The learning outcomes for a placement must be clearly articulated in accordance with the University's usual standards as set out in the University's [Framework for Taught Programmes](#).

5.2 At the programme design stage, care should be taken to articulate the credit contribution of a period of placement to the award. Existing practice in the University includes the following models:

- A period of placement may constitute a module of the programme, carrying credit assessed to a level of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).
- A period of placement may be a mandatory part of the programme, and completion meets a learning outcome, but the placement itself does not carry a credit value.
- Modules mapped against the FHEQ may be studied alongside a period of placement.

- The PGCE/QTS, where the curriculum provides the award of PGCE, and the period of placement meets the government awarded 'Qualifying Teacher Status' (QTS).

## **Assessment**

- 5.3 Assessment which contributes towards meeting learning outcomes for an award should always be undertaken by a trained member of staff familiar with the University's assessment framework or, if that duty is delegated to someone outside of the University, by an individual who is competent to undertake this role and responsibility.

### *Example*

*Students in Health Sciences need to demonstrate the acquisition of appropriate skills to a practitioner. The School offers a programme which prepares registered professionals to achieve the standards required to become an Educator or Mentor, as defined by the appropriate Professional Bodies.*

## **External Examining**

- 5.4 External Examining is an important part of the University's quality assurance processes and as such it is important that any work-based and placement activity is reviewed by external examiners, as any other part of the programme.
- 5.5 External examiners should be provided with material related to, and assessment as an outcome from, periods of assessment. Where possible, external examiners should be provided with the opportunity to speak with staff, students and placement providers who are involved in the teaching and learning aspects of work-based learning and placement activity.

## **Regulations**

- 5.6 If the placement requires an exemption from the usual University regulations, for example, if referral is not permitted for a placement module, or credit is imported in a different way, then the School should seek an exemption or variation from the standard progression regulations from the University's Academic Quality and Standards Subcommittee. Any approved exemptions and/or variations must be clearly stated in the programme regulations.

## **Confidential work on placement**

- 5.7 It is important that placement providers requesting confidentiality of students' reports on their placement activity are aware that the report must be available to a third party for scrutiny in the event of a dispute, or at an External Examiner's request. In all cases, if a project is likely to be confidential or commercially sensitive, a conversation should take place between the student, the University, and the employer, to define the acceptable perimeters of the student's project.

## **After the placement has finished**

- 5.8 Students who have finished their placement may require support to help them transition back to the University studies. It is good practice for the School to arrange some welcome back events to enable students to meet other students, share their experience of undertaking a placement and to give them current information on the University and next part of the programme.

Document Information	
Author	QSAT
Owner (committee)	AQSS
Approved Date	July 2015, June 2023, January 2025
Last Revision	August 2018, May 2022 (logo update), September 2023, January 2025
Type of Document	Guidance