University Policy on Placements

1. Introduction and Scope

1.1 Placement learning can play a key role within academic programmes allowing students to develop their practical skills, their reasoning and judgement and have the opportunity to reflect on employment practice. The University believes that placements benefit students in their future careers and therefore encourages students to partake in placement opportunities offered to them. This policy sets out the principles and processes which apply to the development, delivery and monitoring of placements and work-based learning outside of the University of Southampton's core campuses as part of a taught programme of study. The Policy is informed by the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) with the expectations and practices noted in the supporting advice and guidance on Work-based learning being particularly relevant.

1.2 Due to the variety of placement provision offered across the University and in order to meet the requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies, Schools may already have extensive policy and procedures in place for the management of placement learning. This Policy is designed to provide an overarching framework to support, rather than replace, individual Schools' policies for placement learning, and provides the minimum requirements for the management of placement learning. Individual Schools' policies and procedures for placement learning should be documented and approved by School Programmes Committee.

1.3 Placements may be a compulsory or optional part of a programme but must be planned and contribute to the learning outcomes. Placements may be organised by the University or by the student.

1.4 This Policy applies to all placements or other work-based learning which fall into the following broad categories:

    i.   Industrial Placement/Work Abroad – programmes which incorporate a year in industry in the UK or abroad either in place of, or in addition to, a year that would normally be spent at a University of Southampton campus.

    ii.   Professional and clinical experience placements (UK or international) – programmes which include industrial, clinical or professional placements as part of their programme requirements leading to professional qualifications.

    iii.   Year in Employment (YiE) Placement – where a student chooses to undertake a placement in addition to their standard programme of study.

    iv.   4-year programme – where a student chooses to complete a yearlong placement as part of their degree relative to their programme of study.

1.5 This Policy does not cover part-time, term-time or vacation work arranged by students that is not a planned part of the programme or which does not contribute to the programme's learning outcomes. Study abroad placements are covered by the University's Study Abroad Policy.

2. Principles

2.1 All Schools[1] where students may engage in a placement or work-based learning should ensure that:

- Any placement or work-based learning that is part of a student's programme of study should contribute to the overall learning outcomes of the programme.

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[1] YIE Placements are managed by the Work Experience Team in the Careers and Employability Service and it is the responsibility of this team to ensure compliance with the Policy for YIE Placements.

- There are designated, permanent University staff responsible for the approval, organisation and evaluation of placements.

- That clear documented processes and guidance is available for all those involved in placement and work-based learning activity, including University staff, students and placement providers.

- There is a clear and transparent process to approve prospective placement providers to ensure the quality of the learning environment and the student experience.

- There are agreed monitoring and review mechanisms in place to ensure the quality of the student experience and the continued appropriateness of placement opportunities.

- The University Placement Management System 'InPlace' is used to record the details of all students (including contact details) on placement.

- A list which contains the name and address of placement providers. This should be noted by the School Programmes Committee annually.

3. Setting up a placement with a new provider

3.1 Whether placements are arranged by students or the University, when an arrangement with a placement provider is set up for the first time, the School is responsible for ensuring that:

- There is a procedure in place to approve any placement opportunities to ensure that the proposed placement activity will allow the intended learning outcomes of the programme to be achieved, and to check the suitability of the workplace in terms of legislative requirements, for example, health and safety and employment law. Schools should determine the level of checks required for its placement providers but the approval process

should be documented and approved by School Programmes Committee.

- Where the placement provider will be contributing to the learning outcomes of a programme, for example in providing the work for a project-based dissertation, the provider understands the requirements of UK higher education and the University, and its role in delivering the programme.

- Where a placement provider is involved in assessment, their role must be clearly defined, appropriate training in assessment and feedback must be given, and for summative assessment, the University's policies on moderation and external examiner scrutiny apply.

- A formal agreement is in place. The agreement may take various forms depending on the nature of the placement, from an exchange of letters setting out the rights and responsibilities of the placement provider, University of Southampton, and any student hosted by the placement provider, to a formal contract of employment between the employer and the student.

- A nominated member of staff at the placement provider has line manager/supervisor responsibility for the placement student to ensure the student is supported throughout the placement.

- The placement is compatible with any guidance provided by the relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body.

- The placement provider is compatible with the University's Ethics Policy, including any statements of responsible collaboration (e.g. Tobacco Industry Statement of Responsibility).

- For clinical practice placements, ensuring that adequate indemnity insurance, occupational health and safeguarding requirements for incoming and outgoing students are in place (see Section 10).

- There are named individuals in the School responsible for approving placements and any approval is subject to the University's discretion.

4. Before a student starts on a placement

4.1 Before a student embarks on a placement, the School is responsible for:

- Ensuring that there is a risk assessment in place for each placement. Schools should use the generic risk assessments for placements in the UK and Overseas, which can be found on the Health and Safety [Fieldwork and Placements SharePoint Site](#). In some cases, Schools may have developed specific risk assessments with providers, such as for clinical placements, and the templates for these should also be located on the Health and Safety website. The risk assessment should be completed by the student, reviewed by the Placement Co-ordinator, and then signed off by an Assessor who is required to complete the University's Blackboard Risk Assessment Training on an annual basis.

- Where a School is responsible for allocating placements, an allocation method is used which is fair and transparent, with only those students with established special circumstances or needs (for example, as defined by the Equalities Act) given priority over specific placements.

- Ensuring that students are aware of the placement's academic content, including aims, intended learning outcomes and how they will be assessed, and the opportunities for re-assessment.

- Ensuring that students are briefed about the placement. In some cases, it may be more appropriate for some information to be provided by the placement provider at induction. Students should be briefed on the following:

  - Details of how the student will be able to evaluate their time on placement.

- A description of the contact the student should expect with the University of Southampton during their time on placement, including details of any supervisor or mentor.

- Any roles or responsibilities required of the student in the written agreement between the University and the placement provider.

- Guidance on how to raise concerns about their placement with the School, including guidance on whistleblowing, if appropriate. Students should be made aware of the relevant University policies including the [Regulations Governing Student Complaints](#) and the University's [Whistleblowing Policy](#).

- Any relevant information on their work placement's setting.

- Details of how to contact the University of Southampton in an emergency.

- Full information on health and safety matters before they commence the placement.

- Full information on professional requirements before they commence the placement.

- Supervision or mentoring arrangements.

- Ensuring students are aware, through a clear, published statement, of the consequences of failure to complete their placement and how this may affect their progression.

- Setting up the required agreement with the placement provider.

- Ensuring that students are aware that they are responsible for providing the placement provider with information about their individual needs (for example, a disability) which is relevant to the completion of the placement. Any UK placement that is an integral part of a higher education programme will be covered by both the education and employment provisions of the Equalities Act 2010.

- Ensuring that students have undertaken any necessary checks such as medical screening or Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks before starting the placement. Students who do not submit to these checks will not to be offered places to study programmes which require them.

- Ensuring that students are 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 Visa and Immigration Student Advice Service for further support and guidance.

5. During the placement period

5.1 During a period of placement, the School is responsible for:

- Maintaining contact with the student, as determined by the programme and outlined before the student starts on placement. This may vary between regular site visits to an occasional email communication, depending on the nature of the period away from the University of Southampton.

- Maintaining records of students on placement in the University Placement Management System 'InPlace', including contact details, address of their hosts, and duration of time away from the University. Students should be made aware of the need to provide updated details should these change.

- Ensuring that the placement continues to provide an adequate learning environment for the student, and if it fails to do so, supporting the student to find an alternative so the student's potential to complete the programme is not jeopardised. For example, this may be required if a placement provider received a negative report from a regulatory body which would compromise its ability to provide an adequate work placement for a University of Southampton student.

- Maintaining a student's record on Banner using the [appropriate coding](#).

6. At the end of the placement

6.1 Once a student has finished their time on placement, the School is responsible for:

- Ensuring there are appropriate mechanisms in place to check that placements are completed satisfactorily and for students to evaluate their placement experience and learning.

- Responding to the student's evaluation of their time away from the University, including following up issues with the placement provider if appropriate.

- Carrying out any relevant assessments based on the time on placement.

7. Reviewing placements

7.1 Schools should consider the ongoing appropriateness and effectiveness of placements and work-based learning as part of annual monitoring and student feedback mechanisms.

7.2 For curriculum planning, development and evaluation, employer feedback is a valuable resource and Schools should ensure there are mechanisms for inviting feedback from placement providers.

7.3 Placement providers should be reviewed on a regular basis in line with the requirements for setting up placements as detailed in this policy. How a review is conducted will vary depending on the type of placement available to students. Records of this review should be kept by the School.

8. Health and Safety

8.1 Universities have a statutory duty to ensure, in so far as is reasonably practical, the health, safety and welfare of their employees, students and

placement providers. With regard to the welfare of this latter group, the responsibility lies in not willingly placing a student whom they know, or suspect, may pose a risk to the placement provider, its customers, clients, pupils or patients.

8.2   There should be suitable local documented management arrangements in place within Schools that describe how placements are organised and implemented with specific roles and responsibilities of key personnel clearly identified. A [risk assessment](#) should be carried out which would identify key hazards of all aspects of the placement from travel and accommodation to local work that is to be undertaken at the time. Often other organisations will require a risk assessment to be completed, but the University still has the responsibility for ensuring that the risk assessment is suitable and sufficient. To assist with this, staff should refer to the [UCEA/USHA Health and Safety Guidance for the placement of students.](#)

8.3   As part of training, Schools should ensure that their students are given briefings and information on the outcomes of the placement risk assessment so that students can ensure they carry out actions that have been identified in the risk assessment.

8.4   For students undertaking placements abroad, it is particularly important that risk assessments are carried out and the [University Risk Assessment template](#) should be used. This could be given to the placement provider should they wish. The sign off process of risk assessments should be approved through Schools. Overseas placements should pay particular attention to the information provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for a country or region they are going to. This information should be included within the risk assessment.

8.5   On arriving at the placement students should be fully inducted on health and safety matters from the provider on the first day (or as soon as possible thereafter) and should sign to record that they have received this. The quality and suitability of the induction training should be part

of the pre checks carried out by the School when setting up an agreement for the placement programme with the provider.

8.6 It is important to ensure that if any incidents or accidents occur whilst on placements that appropriate emergency arrangements are effective and that this is recorded with the University Health, Safety and Risk department and fed back into the evaluation process of the placement that the School has responsibility for.

8.7 For further advice on this please contact University of Southampton Health, Safety and Risk department.

9. Equality and Diversity

9.1 Any placement or work-based learning should adhere to the University's Equality and Diversity Policy which states that all members of the University community are:

- to be treated with respect and dignity;
- to be treated fairly with regard to all procedures, assessments and choices;
- to be encouraged to reach one's full potential.

9.2 Schools must therefore be pro-active in locating suitable placement opportunities for those students with protected characteristics and vigilant that no discrimination occurs during the course of identifying, providing or assessing placement. Schools should work with the University's Student Disability and Inclusion Team to identify any equipment and/or assistance identified by way of reasonable adjustments that may be recommended to help individual students with specific needs.

9.3 Placement providers should be provided with information about individual students' needs (with the student's explicit permission as per the University's Data Protection Policy) in order to plan for their learning. They must not be allowed to discriminate by refusing to take the student on placement without reasonable grounds or by providing a

substantially different experience than that offered to other students. The laws for non-UK providers may be different, but it is important that the University establishes a position of protecting students enrolled on its programmes from discrimination, and enabling maximum participation. The University should consider whether to terminate a relationship with a provider which is unable to offer placements for all of its students and Schools are encouraged to seek legal advice on this matter where necessary.

10. Insurance and Indemnity

10.1 During a placement it is possible that things may go wrong. Generally, the main risks are:

- The student may be injured as a result of placement activity;

- The student may, without intention, cause injury or damage as a result of placement activity;

- The student may deliberately cause injury or damage during placement activity.

10.2 Students on work experience or placement are deemed as 'employees' of the placement provider which means that if either the student or a third party makes a claim, it would be dealt with by the employer's (i.e. placement providers) insurers. The University would not normally be involved in any claim.

10.3 Students who attend placement in health services and who will be expected to deliver clinical interventions are not covered by the University for any claim linked to medical malpractice. All Schools must check that placement providers carry liability insurance which covers this circumstance. If they do not, and the School still wishes to proceed to use the placement, then students must obtain personal cover in their own name and provide evidence to the School's satisfaction that this is held by them before commencing the placement. Many professional associations provide this cover at a beneficial rate and so the students

may wish to consider joining such associations. The University holds Medical Malpractice insurance for non-NHS settings, but it is a contingency cover only and so the non-NHS host also needs to have suitable liability insurance. Details of the University cover can be found here:

https://sotonac.sharepoint.com/teams/Insurance/SitePages/Medical-Ma.aspx

10.4 The School should be aware of its obligations to conduct a satisfactory risk assessment and health and safety checks along with the potential implications if these are not carried out.

10.5 All students attending overseas placements should have appropriate insurance cover. In some cases, this may be provided by the University's Insurers. However, some undergraduate students will need to purchase separate insurance cover, depending on the country to be visited. Full details can be found on the University's Insurance webpages. In addition, travellers to EEA countries should obtain a Health Insurance Card obtained through the Post Office or online. Students should provide evidence that they have obtained the required insurance cover to the School's satisfaction before commencing the placement.

11. Confidentiality and Data Protection

11.1 Confidentiality is an area which may impact on the University's liability for students on placement. Any information given by a student to the School, or known about them, is to be treated as confidential. However, in a situation where the School is aware of information which might suggest that there is a greater risk of injury to customers, clients, pupils or patients, it may be necessary to disclose that information to the placement provider. This is a complex area and Schools may need to take advice from legal services on a case-by-case basis.

11.2 Placements inevitably involve some disclosure about students to the placement provider, but before disclosing information about a student

the School should ensure that it complies with the requirements of the University's Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice and in accordance with any provisions of a placement agreement with the provider. In practice this means gaining the explicit permission of students to disclose such information. This is particularly important when this relates to 'sensitive' data relating to, for example: health status; disability issues; criminal convictions, cautions or bind-overs. At the start of their programme, Schools should inform students of the type of information it is deemed necessary to disclose and to alert them to the fact that they may be prevented from attending placement, and thus from completing programme requirements, if they do not give permission for this disclosure.

Document Information	
Author	QSAT
Owner (Committee)	AQSS
Approved Date	February 2014, January 2015 (updated hyperlinks), September 2015, June 2023
Last Revision	August 2018, May 2022 (logo update), September 2023
Type of Document	Policy