

Equality Analysis (EA)

Faculty of Science

Placements and work based learning

A. Policy/practice details

1. The title of the policy being analysed.

Placements and work based learning

2. Please explain the main purpose of the policy being analysed.

Students undertake a 6 or 12-month placement during their course. All placement programmes have a full-time equivalent programme, so that students have a free choice as to whether or not they wish to undertake a placement.

The placements units are co-ordinated by the Placement Tutor, who is a member of departmental academic staff liaise with students and prospective employers to identify suitable placement opportunities for students, and provides help and support to students throughout the placement application process, as well as while they are on placement. While the Placement Team makes all reasonable efforts to help each student to secure a suitable placement, it is made clear to students at the start of the process that the availability of placements cannot be guaranteed. There is no formal minimum mark requirement for students to be permitted to apply for a placement, although the probability of securing a placement and the type of work carried out during the placement are strongly dependent on a student's academic performance, and there may be additional external factors outside the control of either the student or the Faculty. In particular, the Departments within the faculty cannot guarantee that every student will obtain a placement because employers select students for placements taking place within their organisation on the basis of competitive interviews; employers' decisions are outside our control.

The Department maintains an extensive portfolio of potential placements in the UK and in countries abroad. The student selects from these in consultation with the Placement Team, and normally submits a curriculum vitae and application; the student's tutor also provides an academic reference. A list of establishments that might have vacancies for the forthcoming year is available on placement Moodle pages, to which all placement students are given access, and placement are advertised via Moodle when opportunities arise.

Students are advised to consider the following factors when deciding where to apply:

- a. The nature of the organisation; e.g. research establishment, manufacturing company, utility.
- b. The type of work available; on the job training and a willingness to learn new knowledge and skills are an essential part of a placement.

- c. The geographical location. It is stressed to students that there are relatively few placements locally (i.e. Bath and Bristol area) and that the competition for these is very strong.
- d. Their academic record and their future career ambitions.
- e. The salary.

Students complete a form that they then submit to the Placement Tutor; this form includes a question as to whether there are any special personal circumstances (housing, domestic, health etc.) that the student thinks the staff should know about when considering their placement. Advice from the Careers Office on disclosing disabilities is provided to students via the placements Moodle page.

The Placements Team then arranges a one to one meeting with each student, at which they discuss the student's choice of companies and the student's CV. The Placement Team provides CV writing guidelines for students, placements are administrated and supported by the faculty placements team who make suggestions to students as to how they can improve the content and presentation of their CV.

Following this meeting, the placement application process starts. The details of this vary from one placement organisation to another: some require company application forms to be completed; others only ask for a CV and a covering letter, some are on-line. In some cases the student makes the application themselves, whereas in other cases the Placement Team sends the student's CV, and first-year marks, together with a tutor reference if requested and a letter explaining how our placement scheme works.

Students are advised that it is essential that all applications are made with the knowledge of the Placement Team, in order to avoid duplication of effort or confusion and also to ensure that students are not considering a type of placement that would not qualify as a valid placement under departmental rules. They are also advised that they are welcome to make informal enquiries about possible placements at establishments not on the departmental list, but that they must discuss this with the Placement Team – preferably before applying and certainly before accepting an offer. We must be sure that the type of work that students would do on placement is suitable, that the organisation accepts the aims and objectives of our placement scheme, and that the establishment follows accepted safety practices.

Students are directed to guidance provided by the Careers Office on how to prepare for an interview. Some organisations will also carry out assessment and/or aptitude tests.

Before leaving the University to embark on the placement, students attend a briefing session with the Placement Team, where the expectations of a commercial employer and the differences between professional and University life are stressed. The main points of contact with the University while on placement are the Placement Tutor and student's Personal Tutor. Students are encouraged to keep in contact via e-mail, telephone, or letter. Students are visited by a member of staff (normally the placement team) during the placement, who will discuss the student's progress and performance on the project with the student and their external supervisor.

3. Who will be affected?

As well as students and placement employers the university placement teams are also affected by the policy/practice.

4. Aspects of the policy that particularly impact on equality and diversity.

Students aren't allocated placements within the Faculty of Science; they must apply individually for the placements. Placements are advertised to all students, and it is employers who decide which students to employ for their placement opportunities. Our students are typically placed within organisations that have anti-discrimination policies in place, with the majority placed within the UK so they are protected by the Equality Act 2010.

The Faculty follow the guidelines provided within QA6 "Placement Learning, Work-based Learning and Study Abroad" 4.1f and 4.1g (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/learningandteaching/cop/qastatements/QAX/QA06.pdf>) and also the support advice provided on supporting Disabled Students (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/internal/placement/supportingdisabled.htm>).

Students are also provided with the Students' Union placements handbook (<http://www.bathstudent.com/welfare/guides/placement/>), a dedicated team who provide extensive advice and practical help for all students with a disability and/or specific learning differences <http://www.bath.ac.uk/disabilityadvice/>

Students can contact suadvice@bath.ac.uk in case of discrimination or fill in the on-line form <http://www.bathstudent.com/welfare/form/>

B. Analysis

5. Please indicate evidence used and the process by which you have arrived at your conclusions.

Data used

- Information obtained from the faculty placements officer, Director of administration, academic staff. Including discussions exploring equality issues relating to placements
- Data obtained from SAMIS on the number and gender of students undertaking placements in the last 3 years. The first sets of figures are for all students on sandwich programmes within the Faculty. The 2nd set are, of those students, the gender split for students who were on a placement during the year

All students on sandwich programmes
2008/9 = 1027

2009/10= 991

2010/11= 978

2011/12 = 1274

Gender split for students on placement

2009/2010 –145 females, 177 males 45% F 55% M

2010/2011 –213 females, 239 males 47% F 53% M

2011/2012 –158 females, 208 males 43% F 57% M

6. Risk of adverse impact on protected groups.

	High impact	Medium impact	Low impact
Age		X	
Disability	X		
Gender			X
Pregnancy/Maternity	X		
Race/ethnicity	X		
Religion/belief		X	
Sexual Orientation			X
Transgender			X
Marriage/civil partnership		X	

C. Mitigating potential adverse impact

7. Conclusions and recommendations for amendments to the policy/practice. Please give an outline of the key actions based on any gaps, challenges, priorities and opportunities you have identified.

- Students with caring responsibilities would be disadvantaged in applying for placements, as they are more likely to be tied to one particular geographic location. Given that there are very few placements in the Bath/Bristol area, this is a particularly serious factor. There are also no part-time placements.
- We are not aware of any evidence to suggest that female students are disadvantaged with regard to placements.
- Students with disabilities would be disadvantaged in that there would be a reduced number of placements that would be suitable for them. We have no reason to believe that placement employers discriminate against students with disabilities, but employers place great importance on students' communication and organisational skills. If a student has a disability that adversely affects their ability to communicate and/or organise themselves (such as autism, ADHD, depression), but does not declare this disability to the placement employer, this may adversely affect their chances of being offered a placement position.
- Disabilities such as autism may make it harder for students to apply for placements, whether because of anxiety, or difficulties with organising and prioritising activities.
- Some placements in government agencies, particularly those that are defence-related, are only open to British nationals. In addition, employers place great importance on students' communication skills, which may place students whose first language is not English at a disadvantage. Conversely there are placement opportunities in countries such as Germany and China where English is not the primary teaching language, in this case the student's language fluency is taken into consideration.

Placement staff hold one-to-one meetings with each student; discussing their preferences, skills and motivation, and exploring whether there are any particular factors that might lead to them being disadvantaged. These meetings enable Placement staff to ascertain if there are any factors that would be likely to place them at a disadvantage in an interview with a placement employer, and what support could be put in place to reduce or remove these factors.

Based on the data and evidence reviewed, including appropriate consultation, we conclude that the processes followed within throughout the Faculty help to mitigate this risk. Our review and consultations have not resulted in the identification of any actual adverse impact, and we are not making any recommendations for further action.

Our students are typically placed within organisations that have anti-discrimination policies in place, with the majority placed within the UK so they are protected by the Equality Act 2010 and UK employment law.

8. Timescale for implementation of changes or introduction of new policy.

N/A

D. Publication

9. Final reporter: S.ROBINSON/A.HARPER Faculty of Science

10. Date: 01/08/12

11. Review date: