



## Quality Assurance Code of Practice

### Placement Learning

**This document is primarily intended for:**

Placement Teams  
Directors of Studies  
Associate Deans

**Queries:**

**First point of contact –**

Assistant Registrars (Faculty/School) or  
equivalent

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## 1. Purpose and scope

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- 1.1 The purpose of this statement is to set out arrangements for the quality assurance and enhancement of placement learning.
- 1.2 A placement is defined as a negotiated period of learning which normally takes place outside the University, either in the workplace or at another institution, and where the learning outcomes are an intended part of (and credit bearing within) the programme of study. A placement may be of any duration but generally lasts one semester or a full academic year.
- 1.3 This statement covers placements undertaken as part of a foundation degree, undergraduate programme, postgraduate taught programme or professional doctorate.
- 1.4 [QA37](#) Student Exchange Arrangements sets out the requirements for
- evaluating and setting up a formal student exchange with another overseas institution; and
  - the management of, and support for, students on study abroad/exchanges.
- 1.5 Where the student spends periods of time in the workplace throughout the programme of study, placement learning might also be described as work-based learning. Foundation Degrees and the corresponding Honours Years programmes are designed specifically to combine academic work with work-based learning. Generally this involves periods of study interspersed with short placements. In some instances a student on a Foundation Degree or Honours Year programme may be in full or part time employment with their work-based learning provider.
- 1.6 The specific requirements of work-based learning on distance learning programmes, where the majority of the learning is undertaken at a distance in the workplace, with brief periods of learning spent on campus, and where the student is often (but not always) employed by the provider, are addressed in [QA41 Distance Learning](#).
- 1.7 For programmes within the scope of the New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations, Phase 1 for first-degree programmes, there is further guidance on the status of placements and periods of study abroad in “Assessment in the programme context” (see [New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations: Phase 1 for undergraduate programmes](#) (NFAAR-UG)). The weighting of the placement will depend on whether the placement is standard or enhanced. While all placement units must include a mechanism for assessing appropriately the learning outcomes of the placement, the enhanced variety also carries assessed work in relation to the placement that contributes directly and non-trivially to the degree classification.
- 1.8 This statement does not cover internships or vacation work organised outside a programme of study. However, if the University undertakes to evaluate internships it should do so according to the process set out in Section 6 of this statement.

## 2. Principles

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- 2.1 The University is committed to supporting placements in order to enhance the vocational relevance of its awards and the learning experience of its students. Placement learning can form a significant contribution to a student’s personal and professional development and enhance employment prospects by preparing students for work, ensuring they develop transferable/ key skills as well as discipline-based skills. Overseas placements give students the opportunity to experience and learn from different cultures and to master foreign languages and thereby contribute to the University’s internationalisation agenda.

- 2.2 Placement units are an integral part of the programme of study and should therefore contribute to the overall aims of the programme.
- 2.3 The University has a duty of care towards its students undertaking placements and should take reasonable steps to ensure that students are adequately supported before, during and after their placement.

### **3. Placement Team**

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- 3.1 Each Faculty/School should provide a team (the Placement Team) to administer and provide support for the placement process.
- 3.2 The responsibilities of each member of the Placement Team should be clearly defined and communicated, particularly to establish who the primary point of contact is for a student when on placement.
- 3.3 The Placement Team is responsible for administrative and pastoral elements of the placement including the evaluation of the placement and providing support for students.

### **4. Structure of placement units**

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- 4.1 The placement element of any programme should be an integral part of that programme and subject to design, monitoring and review mechanisms.
- 4.2 A Unit Convenor should be appointed to manage a placement unit by overseeing the delivery, monitoring and review of the unit. The Unit Convenor should be an academic member of staff appointed by the Head of Department. Each student should be appointed an academic supervisor who is responsible for providing academic support and in particular, assessing the student's progress against the learning outcomes of the placement unit. The academic supervisor should normally be a member of staff within the Education and Research Job Family e.g. the student's personal tutor. Where a member of staff outside the Education and Research Job Family has a role in assessing the student, their contribution must be moderated by the Unit Convenor.
- 4.3 The aims and learning outcomes of the placement should be integral to the overall aims of the programme of study and should be assessed appropriately. A milestone should be established in the placement unit to establish whether sufficient progress is being made for the learning outcomes to be achieved.
- 4.4 A minimum attendance requirement should be stipulated for all placement units. Year-long placements must comply with the HEFCE minimum requirement of 24 weeks. Where students are unable to fulfil the minimum attendance requirements Individual Mitigating Circumstances procedures should be employed.
- 4.5 A description of the placement unit including learning outcomes, mode of assessment and duration should be included in unit descriptions and handbooks.

### **5. Placement preparation – applying for placements**

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- 5.1 Students should be provided with help and advice with securing a placement, and should be made aware of suitable placement opportunities. Where possible, placement opportunities should be publicised to students with a job description, salary, deadline dates, details of the application and selection process, and background information on the potential placement provider.

- 5.2 Sessions to support students in the placement application process covering CV writing, covering letters, interview technique, assessment centres and testing, and skills training, as appropriate, should be organised by the Placement Team. These sessions might be delivered by the Placement Team or the Careers Service. Where possible, placement preparation should be timetabled. All students intending to go on placement are expected to attend placement preparation sessions (students who secure their placement prior to registering with the University should receive appropriate pre-placement support but are not required to attend preparation sessions on campus.)
- 5.3 As set out in [QA55 Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance](#), any careers information, advice and guidance given to students should be impartial and students should be referred to the Careers Service where expertise in this area is required. Advice and support should be provided by members of staff with a knowledge of the employment market and opportunities. External speakers should be reminded that their advice should be impartial.

## 6. Evaluation of placement providers

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- 6.1 All placement opportunities should be evaluated before, during and after the student has undertaken the placement. Placement Teams are expected to undertake and keep a record of their evaluation of the placement which should include consideration of the learning opportunities, supervision, equality and diversity and health and safety.

### Learning Opportunities

- 6.2 Placement Teams should evaluate the provider's ability to provide appropriate learning opportunities for students to achieve the learning outcomes of the placement (guidance is provided on the [Placement web pages](#)).

### Supervision

- 6.3 Placement Teams should take reasonable steps to satisfy themselves that the student receives adequate and appropriate supervision from members of staff within the placement provider.

### Equality and Diversity

- 6.4 Placement Teams should:
- take reasonable steps to help all students regardless of nationality, race, disability, gender, age, religion, and sexuality to find placement opportunities;
  - encourage students to disclose disabilities so that reasonable adjustments can be made and;
    - where possible, anticipate and communicate reasonable adjustments, and encourage the provider to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of all students
    - where a student has declared a disability, seek advice from the Disability Service about how to arrange the necessary individual support with employers.
  - Placement Teams should take reasonable steps to place students in an environment in which they are treated equally regardless of nationality, race, disability, gender, age, religion and sexuality, whilst recognising that there may be differences in the legal and cultural rules and standards of the host nation of the placement which may not accord with equalities and diversity legislation in the United Kingdom. Where a student intends to take up a placement in a country where there is no comparable equalities and diversity legislation, it is the duty of the Placement Team to brief the student on the difficulties which may be associated with undertaking the placement and to help the student to make an informed decision about undertaking the placement.

## Health and Safety

- 6.5 In accordance with the [University's Health and Safety policies and guidance](#), Placement Teams should:
- Undertake a risk assessment of the placement using the [Risk Assessments tick list](#);
  - Having conducted a risk assessment, take advice and support from the University Health, Safety and Environment service (UHSE) as set out on the placement risk indicator form;
  - Take reasonable steps to make the student aware of any risks that they may be exposed to in undertaking the placement;
  - satisfy themselves that:
    - the prospective placement provider has appropriate health and safety procedures in place which comply either with the [UK requirements](#) or the [requirements of the host country](#) in the case of overseas placements;
    - the provider has insurance cover in accordance with the laws of the host country, including, where possible employer liability insurance and public liability insurance. Where an employer outside the United Kingdom does not offer the student insurance cover, the Placement Team must inform the student of this and satisfy themselves that alternative arrangements are made.
  - take reasonable steps to provide students with the means to make an informed decision about undertaking their placement, particularly with regard to any risks and any legal and cultural differences which may be associated with undertaking a placement outside the United Kingdom. For overseas placements, [Overseas Placements \(Safety and Risk Awareness\)](#) must be used for this purpose.

## Legal

- 6.6 The Placement Teams should seek advice from the Legal Office on legal aspects of the placement including employment law.
- 6.7 Where a student is using their permanent place of employment for their placement, the Placement Team is responsible for carrying out an evaluation of learning opportunities available at the provider (as set out in section 5 of [QA41 Distance Learning](#)). Under these circumstances, the Placement Team is not expected to evaluate the provider's health and safety arrangements or whether the provider complies with other employment legislation.
- 6.8 Where the Department/School/Learning Partnership Office deems a placement learning opportunity to be unsuitable, it is the responsibility of the Placement Team to:
- discuss their objections to the placement opportunity with the student;
  - having discussed the unsuitable nature of the placement learning opportunity with the student, if the student still wishes to go ahead, the Placement Team should seek advice from the Director of Studies, Director of Academic Registry or University Legal Adviser, as appropriate, and indicate to the student in writing that:
    - they consider that the placement learning opportunity would have an adverse effect upon the student's scope for achieving defined learning outcomes and
    - they do not support the opportunity and will not allow the student to undertake the placement.
- 6.9 Where a placement opportunity is a compulsory element of the programme and the student is unable to secure a suitable placement opportunity, the student must either enrol on an alternative programme or, where none is available, withdraw from the programme.

## 7. Responsibilities and briefing of providers

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- 7.1 The Placement Team is responsible for ensuring that:
- the placement provider is briefed before the placement learning opportunity. This briefing will include communication of the learning outcomes the students are expected to

achieve, the responsibilities of the provider during the placement and their role, where appropriate, in the assessment of students

- the responsibilities of the provider are agreed in writing
- the supervisor receives any training or support necessary to fulfil the role, particularly with regard to the assessment of students.

7.2 Where the provider does not have an active role in providing the learning opportunities as is the case on some Year Abroad programmes where a student:

- is following a fixed programme of study in another institution for which they will not receive credit (e.g. a language school) or;
- employed through the British Council, teaching English in a foreign school,

it is not necessary for the Placement Team to brief the provider, as long as the Placement Team has assured itself that the provider has satisfied the requirements stipulated in section 6.

7.3 All students should have a written agreement or contract of employment with their provider setting out their entitlements and responsibilities.

## 8. Support for students on placement

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8.1 Prior to going out on placement, all students should be fully briefed on their rights and responsibilities. This information must be included in a Handbook(s) and cover the following:

### Programme specific information

- learning outcomes of the placement;
- the programme requirements for the placement including the setting of learning objectives, progress reports/milestones and assessment;
- any language or skills preparation available to them;
- the Department/School and University support services available to students during placements;
- point of contact in case of emergency, including the University's 24 hour security phone number to be used in case of an emergency out of hours (as stated in the University's procedure for [responding to significant incidents overseas](#)).

### Generic information

- the University's Code of Conduct for Students undertaking a Placement
- the student's rights and responsibilities whilst on placement including their responsibility to seek out appropriate learning opportunities, to maintain contact with a member of the Placement Team, and to agree learning objectives with their supervisor
- cultural orientation and work expectations
- Health and Safety information and risks relevant to particular countries
- any occupational health considerations
- any legal or ethical considerations (e.g. client confidentiality)
- the need for personal insurance cover particularly when on placement overseas
- information on dealing with problems and complaints.

The University provides a [Placement Handbook](#) containing generic information for use on undergraduate placements. Programme specific information must be provided by the Department.

8.2 Students should be supported throughout their placement and reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that:

- the student is meeting their personal learning objectives

- the student is satisfied with their placement and receiving adequate supervision
- sufficient progress is being made for the student to meet the learning outcomes of the placement unit
- adequate health and safety measures are in place.

- 8.3 The University's [procedure](#) for responding to significant incidents overseas sets out the processes which will be followed should an emergency situation affecting students on placement abroad arise.
- 8.4 The University assures itself of the effectiveness of its placement support mechanisms through an annual review of placements and by obtaining student feedback through the use of online unit evaluation for placements. These support mechanisms are communicated to students through the University Placement Handbook and through information provided by the department in the form of departmental programme and placement handbooks. Students are also made aware of support via online placements information and pre-placement briefings. Mechanisms for support are communicated to staff through online placements information and by sharing good practice through the Placement Tutors Forum.
- 8.5 Shortly after starting their placement, students should set personal learning objectives, based on the learning outcomes of the placement unit. Where the placement provider has an active role in providing the learning opportunities, the student should agree the objectives of the placement with their work-based supervisor. Students should submit their learning objectives to the Placement Unit Convenor for confirmation.

For undergraduate placements of one semester or longer, POLO-1 (Appendix 1) should be used for the setting of objectives. Where it is considered that this form does not meet the needs of the placement (possibly because of the requirements of an accrediting body) an alternative form may be devised and used. Alternative forms for setting learning objectives must be approved by the Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (F/LTQC), and reported to Academic Registry.

- 8.6 All placement units of one semester or more should include at least one milestone to determine whether good progress is being made towards achieving the learning outcomes. Assessment of the milestone might be summative or formative in nature. The milestone might be assessed during the visit. However, the evaluation should be based on written evidence of progress (a verbal report on the student's progress is not sufficient). Form POLO-2 (Appendix 2) may be used for this purpose but is not mandatory.
- 8.7 Contact should be made several times on placement - on arrival to confirm that arrangements at the provider are adequate, and thereafter during the placement as often as is necessary. All students on a placement of one semester or longer in the UK should be visited at least once during the placement. Students should be made aware by the Placement Team that they are expected to contact the Placement Office if they have any areas of concern during their placement.
- 8.8 Members of staff should be provided with guidance on how to conduct a visit or how to manage support mechanisms if a visit is impractical. Generic guidance on, and a template for, visiting students is provided on the [Placement web pages](#).
- 8.9 Departments are encouraged to visit students on placements overseas, where practical. Where it is impractical for students on overseas placements to be visited, Departments must have mechanisms in place for providing commensurate support for students.

## 9. Assessment

- 9.1 The learning outcomes of any placement unit should be assessed appropriately. In the design of the assessment of placement units Departments should take into consideration the timing, load and possible need for a range of assessment mechanisms.
- 9.2 On undergraduate placements of one semester or longer, form POLO - Final (Appendix 3) should be used to assess whether the student has met the personal learning objectives agreed at the outset of their placement. Where it is considered that the form does not meet the needs of the placement (possibly due to the requirements of an accrediting body), an alternative form may be devised and used. Alternative forms for assessing the achievement of learning objectives must be approved by the F/S LTQC and reported to Academic Registry. Assessment of the personal learning objectives should form one element only of the assessment of the learning outcomes of the placement unit.

### Good practice

Assessment might include:

- Making a presentation on the placement experience
- Producing a poster setting out experience on placement
- Producing a portfolio of work carried out on placement
- Writing a reflective commentary on performance and achievement on placement
- Feedback from the employer on the student's performance.

- 9.3 Where the performance of the student on placement forms part of the assessment, the placement provider may be involved in the assessment process on condition that:
- the placement provider is appropriately qualified to undertake the assessment
  - the placement provider's contribution is moderated by a member of staff in the department
  - the placement provider's assessment does not determine whether the student passes or fails the assessment (unless the placement is professionally recognised and the supervisor at the placement provider has been approved as an assessor by Board of Studies as for BSc Social Work).

The Goals, Objectives and Learning form (GOLF) (Appendix 4) may assist the host organisation in assessing the student's performance during and at the end of the placement. Use of the GOLF form is optional.

- 9.4 Assessment will be subject to the [New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations](#) and [QA35 Assessment Procedures for Programmes of Study](#).
- 9.5 In accordance with [QA12 External Examining](#), External Examiners should be encouraged to comment on the placement learning elements of the programme. Where placements units contribute to the degree classification, the External Examiner will review assessed work, completed for the University of Bath, relating to the placement opportunity.
- 9.6 If a student fails the placement component of their programme, on their return to full-time education within the University he/she will normally revert to studying on a related degree without placement, where this option exists.

- 9.7 If a student fails the placement component of their programme, on a programme where there is no related degree without placement, where possible, the student will be given the opportunity to repeat the placement either with the same provider or with an alternative provider. Where a student fails a placement, and where there is no other means of achieving the learning outcomes of the placement, and no alternative programme exists, the student will be required to withdraw from the programme.

## 10. Premature termination of a placement

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- 10.1 If a placement opportunity is terminated prematurely by either the provider, the student or the University:
- the student should contact a member of the Placement Team immediately (except where the placement opportunity has been terminated by the University);
  - it is the responsibility of the Director of Studies to decide whether the student should continue with the programme and therefore to look for an alternative placement opportunity;
  - where the Director of Studies has agreed that the student may undertake another placement opportunity, it is the responsibility of the student to find an alternative. Where the placement opportunity has been terminated through no fault of the student, the Placement Team will make every effort to assist the student in finding an alternative;
  - where a student is unable to secure another placement opportunity, or the Director of Studies considers that it would not be appropriate for the student to undertake another placement opportunity, the student will be required to suspend their studies for the remainder of that stage. With the agreement of the Director of Studies, the student may repeat the placement opportunity. Where the student is unable to repeat the placement learning opportunity, the procedures set out in 9.6-9.7 will apply.

## 11. Return from placement

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- 11.1 On return from placement students should be asked to complete unit evaluation for their experience on placement which should cover the academic elements of the unit and the level of support they received from the University. The University has approved a set of [core questions](#) that should be used for this purpose and the process should be managed in the same way as other units on the programme. A separate evaluation of their experience of the placement provider should also be conducted. A record of this evaluation should be kept by the department and it should form part of the evaluation process if further placements are to be taken up at the same provider.
- 11.2 Students should be provided with a re-induction to the University which should take into consideration both their academic and welfare needs.

## 12. Review and monitoring

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- 12.1 In addition to placement unit evaluation (See 11.1), students will be surveyed on their placement experience through the National Student Survey (final year undergraduate students).
- 12.2 When requested by University Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (ULTQC), Placement Unit Convenors should produce a brief report of issues and good practice relating to its placement unit Academic Registry should prepare a report to be considered by University Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee, where applicable.
- 12.3 ULTQC monitors the direction of placement provision across the University.

### 13. Supporting staff to fulfil their roles

- 13.1 The University is committed to providing staff with internal and external mechanisms to support their work in relation to placement learning.
- 13.2 The Head of Faculty/Department/Learning Partnerships Office is responsible for equipping staff in the Placement Team to undertake their roles effectively. Placement Teams are not expected to have expert knowledge and should seek expert advice when necessary.
- 13.3 All new placement staff should be given an appropriate induction and thereafter development opportunities to enable them to keep up to date with changes in placement provision.
- 13.4 A [website to support Placement Teams](#) is available and maintained regularly.
- 13.5 It is the role of the Placement Tutors Forum to discuss issues and share good practice relating to placements.
- 13.6 The University is a member of [Association for Sandwich Education and Training](#) (ASET) which provides advice and guidance on matters relating to placement learning provision.

Statement Details													
<b>Issue Version:</b>	5.8												
<b>Date:</b>	September 2018												
<b>Antecedents:</b>	<table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td><i>Senate</i></td> <td>11/06/2008 Minute 12782 09/04/2008 Minute 12740 15/06/2005 Minute 12142</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations (NFAAR)</i></td> <td>15/12/2004 Minute 12035 14/04/2010 Minute 13110 08/06/2011 Minute</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Quality Assurance Committee</i></td> <td>01/07/2008, Minute 857(1)(7)(8) 05/06/2006, Minute 623(6) 06/09/2002, Minute 318 13/07/2010, Minute 1095(1)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>University Learning Teaching and Quality Committee</i></td> <td>13/07/2011, Minute 121 12/05/2012 Minute 248 9/07/2013 Minute 403 8/07/2014 Minute 552 7/07/2015 Minute 671 5/07/2016 Minute 807 11 July 2017 Minute 940 22 May 2018 Minute 1040</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Placement Tutors Forum</i></td> <td>17/05/2006, Minute 3 08/07/2002, Minute 19</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Academic Studies Committee</i></td> <td>Minutes 166, 172(iv), 238</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>Senate</i>	11/06/2008 Minute 12782 09/04/2008 Minute 12740 15/06/2005 Minute 12142	<i>New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations (NFAAR)</i>	15/12/2004 Minute 12035 14/04/2010 Minute 13110 08/06/2011 Minute	<i>Quality Assurance Committee</i>	01/07/2008, Minute 857(1)(7)(8) 05/06/2006, Minute 623(6) 06/09/2002, Minute 318 13/07/2010, Minute 1095(1)	<i>University Learning Teaching and Quality Committee</i>	13/07/2011, Minute 121 12/05/2012 Minute 248 9/07/2013 Minute 403 8/07/2014 Minute 552 7/07/2015 Minute 671 5/07/2016 Minute 807 11 July 2017 Minute 940 22 May 2018 Minute 1040	<i>Placement Tutors Forum</i>	17/05/2006, Minute 3 08/07/2002, Minute 19	<i>Academic Studies Committee</i>	Minutes 166, 172(iv), 238
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<b>Related Documentation:</b>	<a href="#">New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations (NFAAR) - University of Bath</a> <a href="#">QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education</a>												
<b>Author:</b>	Academic Registry												