# 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
**Further advice:** Placement Managers (Faculty/School)

## Contents

1. Purpose and scope ..... 1
2. Principles ..... 2
3. Placement Team ..... 3
4. Structure of placement units ..... 3
5. Placement preparation – applying for placements ..... 4
6. Evaluation of placement providers ..... 4
7. Responsibilities and briefing of providers ..... 6
8. Support for students on placement ..... 7
9. Assessment ..... 9
10. Premature termination of a placement ..... 10
11. Return from placement ..... 10
12. Review and monitoring ..... 11
13. Supporting staff to fulfil their roles ..... 11

## 1 Purpose and scope

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 snoinegotiated 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 course 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 course, postgraduate taught course, 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 course of study, placement learning might also be described as work-based learning. Foundation Degrees and the corresponding Honours Years courses 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 course may be in full or part time employment with their work-based learning provider. An apprenticeship course is work-based learning, not a placement.

1.6 The specific requirements of work-based learning and distance learning courses, where the majority of the learning is undertaken at a distance or 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 Provision.

1.7 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 course of study. However, if the University undertakes to evaluate internships it will do so according to the process set out in Section 6 of this statement.

## 2 Principles

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 course of study and will therefore contribute to the overall aims of the course.

2.3 The University has a duty of care towards its students' undertaking placements and will take reasonable steps to ensure that students are adequately supported before, during and after their placement.

## 3 Placement Team

3.1 Each Faculty/School will 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 will 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

4.1 The placement element of any course will be an integral part of that course and subject to design, monitoring and review mechanisms.

4.2 A Unit Convenor will be appointed to manage a placement unit by overseeing the delivery, monitoring and review of the unit. The Unit Convenor will be an academic member of staff appointed by the Head of Department. Each student will 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 will normally be a member of staff within the Education and Research Job Family e.g., the student's academic advisor. 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 will be integral to the overall aims of the course of study and will be assessed appropriately. A milestone will 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 will be stipulated for all placement units. Year-long placements must comply with the statutory requirement of a minimum of 24 weeks for a placement opportunity to be funded. This constitutes a minimum of 15 weeks' working for the placement provider, supplemented, if necessary, with nine weeks of study, approved and delivered by the University.

4.5 A description of the placement unit including learning outcomes, mode of assessment and duration will be included in unit descriptions and handbooks.

## 5 Placement preparation – applying for placements

5.1 Students will have access to help and advice with securing a placement, and to information on suitable placement opportunities. Where possible, placement opportunities will 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, will be organised by the Placement Team. These sessions might be delivered by the Placement Team or the Careers Service. Where possible, placement preparation will 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 will 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 will be impartial and students will be referred to the Careers Service where expertise in this area is required. Advice and support will be provided by members of staff with a knowledge of the employment market and opportunities. Staff will remind external speakers that their advice should be impartial.

## 6 Evaluation of placement providers

6.1 All placement opportunities will 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 including consideration of the learning opportunities, supervision, equality and diversity and health and safety.

### Learning Opportunities

6.2 Placement Teams will evaluate the provider's ability to provide appropriate learning opportunities for students to achieve the learning outcomes of the placement.

### Supervision

6.3 Placement Teams will 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 will:

- 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 will 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 will:

- Undertake a risk assessment of the placement
- Having conducted a risk assessment, take advice and support from the Safety, Health and Employee Wellbeing services (SHEW).
- 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 Placement Teams will 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 4 of QA41 Distance Learning Provision). 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 will 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 course and the student is unable to secure a suitable placement opportunity, the student must either enrol on an alternative course or, where none is available, withdraw from the course.

## 7 Responsibilities and briefing of providers

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 will have a written agreement or contract of employment with their provider setting out their entitlements and responsibilities.

## 8 Support for students on placement

8.1 Prior to going out on placement, all students will be fully briefed on their rights and responsibilities. This information must be provided in writing and cover the following:

**Course specific information**

- learning outcomes of the placement;
- the course 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 placements. Course specific information must be provided by the Department.

8.2 Support will be available to students throughout their placement and reasonable steps will 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 a review of placements (for details see 12.2) 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 course 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 Employability Forum.

8.5 Shortly after starting their placement, students are expected to 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 is expected to agree the objectives of the placement with their work-based supervisor. Students are expected to provide a brief overview of their role and responsibilities, and a brief summary of their current and upcoming work/projects through the Placements Information Management System (PIMS).

For placements of one semester or longer, students will be provided with a framework for undertaking a learning needs analysis and setting learning objectives for their placement.

8.6 All placement units of one semester or more will 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 will be based on evidence of progress and this will typically be assessed during the visit, plus evidence of progress will be captured through the PIMS visit form.

8.7 Students are expected to complete the PIMS initial questionnaire, to confirm that arrangements at the provider are adequate, and thereafter during the placement as often as is necessary. Departments must have effective means of supporting and evaluating the placement opportunity in place. All students on a placement of one semester or longer in the UK should normally be visited at least once during the placement. If a physical visit does not take place, a virtual alternative must be put in place. Students will 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 will be provided with guidance on how to conduct a visit or how to manage support mechanisms if a visit is impractical. Generic guidance on visiting students is provided on the Employability Forum Teams Page.

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, including the extent to which the student has met their personal learning objectives, will be assessed appropriately. In the design of the assessment of placement units, Departments will take into consideration the timing, load and possible need for a range of assessment mechanisms.

9.2 On placements of one semester or longer, an end of placement reflection mechanism will normally be put in place to assess whether the student has met the personal learning objectives agreed at the outset of their placement. Assessment of the personal learning objectives will 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).

9.4 Assessment will be subject to the relevant assessment regulations for the course of study and QA35 Assessment Procedures for Taught Courses of Study.

9.5 In accordance with QA12 External Examining (Taught Provision), External Examiners will be encouraged to comment on the placement learning elements of the course. Where placement 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 course, on their return to full-time education within the University they 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 course, on a course 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 course exists, the student will be required to withdraw from the course.

## 10 Premature termination of a placement

10.1 If a placement opportunity is terminated prematurely by either the provider, the student or the University:

- the student is expected to 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 course 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

11.1 On return from placement, students will be asked to complete a survey evaluating their experience on placement, covering 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 will normally be used for this purpose and the process should be managed in the same way as other units on the course. Students are expected to complete the Final Placement questionnaire on PIMS, which includes an evaluation of the placement provider.

11.2 Students can expect to have a re-induction to the University, which takes into consideration both their academic and welfare needs. QA38 Induction of Students sets out arrangements for the induction of students on taught courses.

## 12 Review and monitoring

12.1 In addition to a placement 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 the University's Education, Quality and Standards Committee (EQSC), Placement Unit Convenors will produce a brief report of issues and good practice relating to the placement unit. Academic Registry will prepare a report to be considered by EQSC, where applicable.

12.3 EQSC 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 will seek expert advice when necessary.

13.3 All new placement staff member will be given an appropriate induction and thereafter development opportunities to enable them to keep up to date with changes in placement provision.

13.4 Resources to support Placement Teams are available on the Employability Forum Teams Page and are maintained regularly.

13.5 It is the role of the Employability Forum to discuss issues and share good practice relating to placements.

## Statement Details

| | |
|---|---|
| **Issue Version:** | 5.1 |
| **Date:** | August 2026 |
| **Antecedents:** | **Academic Studies Committee:**<br>Minutes 166, 172(iv), 238<br><br>**Placement Tutors Forum:**<br>17/05/2006, Minute 3<br>08/07/2002, Minute 19<br><br>**Quality Assurance Committee:**<br>01/07/2008 Minute 857(1)(7)(8)<br>05/06/2006 Minute 623(6)<br>06/09/2002 Minute 318<br>13/07/2010 Minute 1095(1)<br><br>**Senate - New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations (NFAAR):**<br>11/06/2008 Minute 12782<br>09/04/2008 Minute 12740<br>15/06/2005 Minute 12142<br>15/12/2004 Minute 12035<br>14/04/2010 Minute 13110<br>08/06/2011 Minute<br><br>**University Learning Teaching and Quality Committee:**<br>13/07/2011 Minute 121<br>12/05/2012 Minute 248<br>9/07/2013 Minute 403<br>8/07/2014 Minute 552<br>7/07/2015 Minute 671<br>5/07/2016 Minute 807<br>11 July 2017 Minute 940<br>22 May 2018 Minute 1040<br>16 July 2019 Minute 1197<br><br>**Education, Quality and Standards Committee:**<br>March 2022, Draft Minutes 180 and 182<br>Approved by EQSC September 2023 (via correspondence)<br>May 2024<br>May 2025<br>June 2026 |
| **Related Documentation:** | **External:** QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education<br>**Internal:**<br>University Assessment Regulations<br>University of Bath Student Protection Plan (SPP) |
| **Author:** | Academic Registry |