

Learning and Teaching Support Handbook

Chapter 18 - Student placements: Code of good practice

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This code of good practice exists to ensure that the arrangements for students who are on a placement as part of their academic programmes are well organised and that the activities carried out during the placement are academically beneficial. It is recognised that placements encompass a wide range of activities with a variety of associated aims, intended learning outcomes and assessment processes. This code is therefore broadly based, listing matters common to all placements, both taught and research.
- 1.2 Student placements that are part of an academic programme of study may take a variety of forms. 'Placements' generally refers to a period of time.
- 1.3 For placements that are arranged to take place outside of the United Kingdom, please refer to the Study Abroad and Work Experience Code of Practice.

2. Planning a placement

- 2.1 All Faculties (or delegated Schools) of the University making use of placements for their students as part of academic programmes need to be sure that they have fully considered a range of quality assurance issues. A checklist is provided at Annex A to pose a number of questions to assist Faculties (or delegated Schools) in this process. All new programme proposals including placements need to have considered and addressed the checklist. This checklist should also be used by Faculties (or delegated Schools) to review current practice and provide Annual Quality Review panels with an additional tool in their process of review.

3. Management of placements

- 3.1 Each Faculty (or delegated School) should publish its procedures for managing any placements required as part of its academic programmes.
- 3.2 In developing student placements, the Faculty (or delegated School) should ensure where appropriate that the learning content accommodates national subject benchmark statements and the requirements of any accrediting relevant professional and statutory bodies.

- 3.3 The programme specification should indicate clearly the contribution of the placement to the learning process.
- 3.4 The provision of placements should promote equality of opportunity for students, as encouraged by the University and required under anti-discrimination legislation relating to race relations, disability discrimination and sex discrimination. Where required, advice should be sought from the University's Equal Opportunities Officer or AccessAbility.
- 3.5 Every placement should be subject to a formal agreement deposited with the Faculty (or delegated School). The agreement may take various forms depending on the nature of the placement, from an exchange of letters via an external organising central process for a teaching assistantship to a formal contract for an industrial work place and a teacher training position listing in some detail the responsibilities of the various parties. The agreement should also pay appropriate attention to health and safety and to any insurance and professional indemnity issues. All such agreements should be reviewed by the Faculty (or delegated School) on an annual basis.
- 3.6 Close and regular contact between key people in placement partners is an essential pre-requisite for successful placements. Each Faculty (or delegated School) should have a nominated link person (or persons) carrying overall responsibility for managing placements within the curriculum. The Faculty (or delegated School) should also have on record the name of the principal active link person where the student placement is located.
- 3.7 Regular placements should be visited from time to time by the appropriate Faculty (or delegated School) link person, ideally while a student is present, to underpin the strength of the arrangement and to discuss matters of concern and/or interest. This may not always be an annual exercise but the Faculty (or delegated School) should have a clear policy relating to the regularity of such visits.

4. Student preparation

- 4.1 Students should be fully equipped to capitalise on their placements by being prepared before commencement in the following areas:

Academic:

Students should be aware of a placement's academic content, including aims, intended

learning outcomes, option availability, assignment and assessment requirements, and its contribution to a programme's overall assessment. Faculties (or delegated Schools) and student should always agree in writing an agreed programme of activity before the commencement of a placement: this may take the form of a standard module template. [*Where the placement is at an EU academic institution, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) should allow harmonisation of credits.*]

Language:

Where the placement is overseas and the language spoken is not English, students should be prepared in the language concerned, following an accredited suite of modules. It is important that the availability of such provision is established before any commitment is entered into. Students failing to meet a declared level of proficiency should not be permitted to complete a placement overseas. Non-language Faculties (or delegated Schools) should set tests through the [Foreign Language Centre](#) agreeing the minimum number of credits advisable to lift students of different experience to the required level.

Where the language spoken in the placement is English in a country where the principal language is not, Faculties (or delegated Schools) must have a clear, published strategy for ensuring that the students concerned are equipped sufficiently to engage positively with the local community using the language of that community. In light of the above recommendations Faculties (or delegated Schools) should keep under review their language entrance requirements for programmes with European Study/with Study Abroad and other opportunities for studying abroad. Please see the Study Abroad Code of Practice for further details on language training provision.

Accommodation:

Students should be given full advice on how and where to apply for suitable accommodation.

Living Abroad:

If the placement is overseas, students should be provided with appropriate advice on the customs and culture of the country in question and on any health requirements.

Costs:

Students should be given advice on costs arising from placements including accommodation and travel.

- 4.2 Students should be made aware by Faculties (or delegated Schools) of their own responsibilities towards the successful outcome of a placement, including the need to communicate regularly with the home Faculty (or delegated School), to meet academic requirements and to observe the expectations of both University and provider relating to the management of the placement.
- 4.3 It is good practice for students to be provided with a Faculty (or delegated School) placement handbook.
- 4.4 Faculties (or delegated Schools) should ensure that feedback from students returning from placement is used as part of the preparation of those about to undergo the same experience. This should include reference to academic, financial, social and cultural issues, as well as more practical matters such as accommodation and travel.
- 4.5 Attention should be drawn to the web site of [Go Abroad](#) which contains useful advice for students taking up placements abroad.

5. Student support and progress

- 5.1 For each placement, Faculties (or delegated Schools) must clearly identify to the student before commencement:
 - a. The name of the link person in the home Faculty (or delegated School) responsible for managing the placement.
 - b. The name of the contact person at the placement who will provide necessary pastoral/tutorial support.
 - c. The nature of the academic and pastoral support available to the student from the home Faculty (or delegated School) including visits.
- 5.2 Named link persons should have clear and explicit roles and responsibilities of which students should be made aware.
- 5.3 The monitoring of student progress during a placement also represents an important tool in the support of students. The manner of such monitoring will depend in part on the nature of a placement, but examples of good practice include the following:
 - a. The preparation by students of a logbook or diary which could become part of the assessment; this is particularly useful for students on work placements and teaching assistantships;

- b. The periodic request, perhaps once a term, to students to produce reports on their placement experience, to be sent to the Faculty's (or delegated School's) link person for the placement;
 - c. Regular e-mail contact between the Faculty (or delegated School) link person and students on placement;
 - d. The need for Faculties (or delegated Schools) to act swiftly on problems raised by students.
- 5.4 Documentation issued to students should include reference to an appropriate complaints procedure, for use as required by a student about a placement and by the placement provider about the student.

6. Accreditation of placements

- 6.1 The University's adoption of enhanced modularity requires the recognition in terms of credits of all the assessed components of a student's programme. Credits should therefore be applied to placement components. Although the University has defined credit in terms of workload (1 credit as being equal to a notional 10 hours of learning), it is recognised that many placement requirements are not so easily quantified. It is therefore recommended that in the case of placements, credit should be applied broadly in terms of the proportions of an academic year spent away. A full undergraduate year, for instance, would attract 120 credits, a semester 60 credits.
- 6.2 Accreditation should extend to all such study periods spent away, including those which involve a student working in industry or taking paid employment as a language assistant provided this is a part of a student programme which the student has to pass.

7. Assessment

- 7.1 Faculties (or delegated Schools) are reminded that under the University's credit and award criteria, a full year spent on placement must attract 120 (undergraduate) or 180 (taught postgraduate) credits, all awarded on the basis of assessments carried out during the year and/or a subsequent assessment carried out on a student's return. Assessments must also be carried out in respect of time spent on placements which last less than a year and attract proportionally less than 120 (or 180) credits.
- 7.2 All placements integral to a programme must attract a mark or set of marks which will include any or all of the following:

- a. Marks for assessments undertaken during the placement.
- b. Marks for assessments undertaken on return.

Where a student's placement is not directly assessed by those providing the experience, as it would be at a university, the Faculty (or delegated School) should set in place a clear mechanism for the assessment of that experience.

- 7.3 The assessment of the placement may use a variety of methods appropriate to the programme of study, but all must be subject to specified conditions. There must be agreed learning outcomes known to the students involved as well as to the placement link person.
- 7.4 A placement that is a formal part of the curriculum should in every case contribute to the final award of the programme of study. Its weighting within a Faculty (or delegated School) or programme's assessment criteria for the final award is at the discretion of the Faculty (or delegated School) or Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee but must be clearly stated in the assessment conventions approved by the Board of the appropriate Faculty.
- 7.5 Faculties (or delegated Schools) will prepare pass/fail result sheets for the students who have spent a period on placement. The result sheets will be ordered by programme and issued to each Faculty's (or delegated School's) Examinations Officer or the Chair of a Flexible Combined Honours Degree Board of Studies. The result sheet will be returned to the Faculty Office by the date set by that Office.
- 7.6 The failure of a placement will be recorded on a student's transcript.
- 7.7 The Dean for Taught Students is empowered to act concerning student progression in cases of student failure where action is required ahead of the next scheduled Faculty Board meeting.
- 7.8 A profile of marks for an undergraduate placement in respect of all accredited elements will be returned by the Faculty (or delegated School) (or Flexible Combined Honours Degree Board) as soon as possible after the end of the Summer Term.

8. Conversion of marks/grades

- 8.1 The assessment of placements should normally attract mark(s) rather than merely a pass/fail outcome. The mark(s) will be reported on a student's transcript.
- 8.2 Most placements within the UK will be subject to direct assessment by the home Faculty (or delegated School). The marking scheme should follow the Faculty (or delegated

School's) internal conventions. If the external person heading a placement is involved in assessing the student, appropriate guidance should be provided by the Faculty (or delegated School) to ensure comparability across the various placements within a particular level.

- 8.3 Paragraph 7.1 above refers to other circumstances where placements will generate marks relating directly to a Faculty (or delegated School's) assessment scheme which should require no conversion process.
- 8.4 In all cases, details of the assessment and marking processes should be subject to annual monitoring by the external examiners.

9. Examination Board Procedures

- 9.1 The procedures described under 7 and 8 above will produce a mark for an Exeter student's placement that will count towards their end-of-year assessment. It should therefore be submitted to an examination board in the same way as other marks. It will be for a Faculty (or delegated School), subject to the approval of the appropriate Faculty Board, to define the weighting that such a mark will contribute to a final degree classification or award result. In all circumstances this weighting should be included in the assessment information issued by a Faculty (or delegated School) to its students.
- 9.2 The placement assignment(s) by a student contributing to the module mark should be available for monitoring by an external examiner in the process agreed with the examiner.

10. Treatment of failure

- 10.1 All programmes must make provision for the treatment of failure arising from placements. Information issued to students by Faculty (or delegated School) must clearly spell out the penalties of failure.
- 10.2 Faculty (or delegated School) procedures for the treatment of failure must be approved by the Dean for Taught Students.

11. Exemption and non-completion

- 11.1 Faculties (or delegated Schools) should have clear procedures, approved by the Dean for Taught Students, for managing exemptions from placements otherwise required for the successful completion of a programme of study.

11.2 Faculties (or delegated Schools) must publish clear statements of the academic consequences of non-completion by students of any part of a placement (which may be for reasons beyond their control) or of a failure to secure a placement.

12. Debriefing of Students

12.1 The debriefing of students on their return from placements is an important element of the learning process. It serves to validate the student's experience by confirming the importance that the University attaches to it. It also helps to advance the process of reflection on personal gains; debriefing in the context of a student's personal development plan could be especially useful.

12.2 Faculties (or delegated Schools) should manage the debriefing process in a manner most appropriate to their circumstances but in all cases provision should be made for the following:

- a. All returning students should be asked to provide feedback to their Faculty (or delegated School) on their placements, through questionnaires, focus groups, interviews or other convenient means.
- b. Students should be enabled to reflect on the nature of their placement experience in the context of their programmes of study, though not necessarily through formative or summative assessment exercises.
- c. Faculties (or delegated Schools) should make every effort for students to benefit from the placement experience in any further learning and assessment.
- d. The experience of students in specific placements should be made available to those subsequently going to the same placements, both academic and practical arrangements. The means could include: *inter alia*, presentations, web-based information and questionnaire results.

12.3 It is good practice to recognise that placements contribute to students' understanding and to the development of their key skills. This should be recognised in the programme specification and in the design of learning and teaching following placement activity.

13. Quality Assurance

13.1 For each placement, Faculties (or delegated Schools) must assure themselves of its quality to ensure that students will receive a rewarding academic experience

appropriate to their programme. The following are examples of processes that will aid this procedure:

- a. Careful validation of the academic content, standards and learning outcomes of the placement and its relation to the remainder of the programme.
 - b. Regular contact between the home link person and a placement contact person, including reports on students.
 - c. Occasional visits to the placement.
 - d. Formal mechanism for student evaluation of the placement, both during and after.
- 13.2 The effectiveness of Faculties (or delegated Schools) in preparing their students for placements should be tested through their internal evaluation procedures (including feedback from students after the period away) and will be further evaluated through the Annual Quality Review process (see Chapter 2 of the Quality Review and Enhancement Framework). The management of questionnaires and other valuation devices should be made clear to students, including feedback to those who completed them and the subsequent use of results.
- 13.3 Additionally, Faculties (or delegated Schools) should evaluate the progress and experience on placements of students from different racial groups and of those who are disabled. Where required, advice should be sought from the University's Equal Opportunities Officer or AccessAbility.

14. Communication

- 14.1 All parties involved in a placement must be informed of the detailed arrangements concluded under the above headings.