



UNIVERSITY POLICY: WORK-BASED AND PLACEMENT LEARNING

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and Context:

The purpose of this policy is to set out principles and processes which apply to the development, delivery and monitoring of consistently safe and high quality work-based and placement learning experiences for students. The policy is aligned with the University's Education Strategy and applies to all placements and work-based learning contributing to Queen's University Belfast programmes, although it is recognised that how it is implemented will vary according to local circumstances. It is also informed by the UK Quality Code of Practice for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance: Work-based learning (November 2018).

1.2 Definitions:

1.2.1. Placement: For the purposes of this policy, placement is defined as a planned period of work-based employment or practical experience. This normally takes place outside the University, is part of the student's programme of study and fulfils intended learning outcomes. A placement may be required or optional and may, or may not, be credit bearing. Although the student is registered at the University and remains subject to University regulations, direct supervision is transferred to a host supervisor for a set period of time.

1.2.2. Work-based learning: "This involves learning through work, learning for work and/or learning at work. It consists of authentic, structured opportunities for learning which are achieved in a workplace setting or are designed to meet an identified workplace need. The type of learning typically has a dual function of being designed to meet the learning needs of employees, developing their knowledge, skills and professional behaviours, and also meeting the workforce development needs of the organisation" (UKSCQA Nov 2018).

1.3 In the context of Queen's University, this policy applies to:

- Year-long placements.
- Vacation and semester placements/internships.
- Work-based learning modules.
- Clinical/Professional/Practice placements.
- Research Placements.

1.3.1 The policy does not explicitly apply to the following types of provision, although many of the principles in this policy will still apply:

- Study Abroad and Student Exchanges (outgoing & incoming). See Appendix 1.
- Fieldwork or Fieldtrips.
- Work-related projects.
- Time spent at another institution as a formal part of a Queen's University degree programme.

1.4 Objectives of Work-Based and Placement Learning:

- To develop employability skills, intellectual skills, linguistic skills, core or key skills, personal attributes and gain insight into how different professions and cultures work.
- To consolidate, complement and extend the academic programme and enable the essential integration of clinical/professional practice.
- To assist students to evaluate and understand how work/study abroad experience relates to their personal, career and future professional development.
- To develop clinical/professional skills and to strengthen the application of theory to practice within the context of the commitment to lifelong learning and the continuing professional development of the individual.
- To enable students to have a positive cultural/academic experience.
- To enhance students' familiarity with the world of work and different cultures and enable them to reflect constructively on the experience.
- To maintain and develop links between the University, the placement provider and the community.

UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES: WORK BASED AND PLACEMENT LEARNING

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and Context:

These guidelines do not aim to prescribe a preferred model for work-based and placement learning, nor to list in detail the many academic and supporting functions, which need to be undertaken to monitor all forms of work-based and placement learning. They aim to provide a set of principles, based on existing good practice, which may be of benefit to those involved in programmes incorporating a period of work-based or placement learning or in the modification of programmes to include work-based and placement learning.

Academic Schools are the main provider of work based and placement learning. However in some cases, units such as Faculty or Central Support Services may also provide and facilitate work-based and placement learning opportunities.

To reflect the wide variety of courses, it is recommended that each School/Unit produce their own work-based learning/placement learning documents, to supplement the University documents.

2. OUTLINE OF OPERATIONAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Operational Roles and Responsibilities (Specific titles may vary across the University and within Schools and Units)

2.2.1 School/Unit – Schools are the main provider of work-based and placement learning. However in some cases Units such as Faculty or Central Support Services may also provide and facilitate work-based and placement learning.

Schools/Units are responsible for:

- Ensuring that information produced in relation to work-based and placement learning is clear, unambiguous and consistent i.e. within School handbooks, University prospectuses and other sources e.g. School webpages, QOL. To accommodate the requirements of students with a disability, all documents should be available in alternative formats.
- Making students aware of their responsibilities in relation to sourcing, securing and seeking approval for work-based and placement learning opportunities.
- Making students aware of their responsibilities as representatives of the University.
- Developing a system to ensure that work-based and placement learning opportunities are approved by relevant staff in Schools/Units.
- Ensuring that intended learning outcomes for work-based and placement learning are appropriate to, and explicit in, the programme specification.
- Providing written guidelines with specific reference to learning outcomes and assessment for students, placement providers, visiting tutors and placement co-ordinators.
- Providing visiting staff who will maintain contact with the student.
- Ensuring accurate records are kept for monitoring purposes on all aspects of work-based and placement learning; for example, securing placements, contact with students and complaints. All records should comply with GDPR.
- Ensuring that the work-based learning/placement provider has appropriate Health and Safety arrangements in place and that all students are aware of both the provider's responsibilities and their own in relation to Health and Safety. (See section 11)

- Ensuring that work-based and placement learning opportunities are appropriate to the diverse needs of students and based on guidelines identified in Section 10 of this document and adopt a flexible approach, where appropriate, in order to enable learning outcomes to be achieved.
- Seeking feedback from providers and students regarding processes and procedures relating to work-based and placement learning.

2.2.2 Work-Based/Placement Learning Co-ordinator - Designated staff within the University who support students throughout the work-based and placement learning process.

Work-Based/Placement Learning Co-ordinator is responsible for:

- Co-ordinating, managing and monitoring work-based and placement learning opportunities.
- Ensuring students are made aware of resources to help them source and secure work-based and placement learning opportunities.
- Obtaining confirmation from providers to ensure that appropriate Health and Safety arrangements in place. (See section 11)
- Ensuring compliance prior to and during work-based/placement by monitoring Health and Safety arrangements, ethical considerations, intellectual property rights (IPR) and equality of opportunity for students.
- Monitoring students' progress and ensuring that visiting staff carry out placement visits as appropriate.
- Liaising with providers and ensuring that the nominated Work- Based/Placement Supervisor/Clinical Supervisor or Host Research Supervisor is aware of the aims of the placement and any assessment requirements.
- In the case of students with a disability ensuring, where appropriate, that "reasonable adjustments" in host organisations have been made. Guidance and support on all aspects of disability will be provided by Disability Services. (See section 10)

2.2.3 Visiting Staff - Designated University staff who will maintain contact with and support the learning of the student while undertaking a period of work-based or placement learning.

Visiting Staff should:

- Be familiar with the course regulations and the assessment requirements for the students visited.
- Ensure regular points of contact by whatever means appropriate; i.e. visits, Skype calls etc.
- Discuss progress, assessment, reports etc. with student and work-based supervisor/clinical supervisor/research supervisor.
- Monitor the quality of the work-based/placement learning opportunity to ensure that learning opportunities are appropriate.
- Complete a written report if required and report any relevant matter to the Work-Based/Placement Learning Co-ordinator.

2.2.4 Work-Based Supervisor - Designated person within the host provider organisation who is responsible for direct supervision of the student while undertaking a period of work-based/ placement learning.

Work-Based Supervisor should:

- Be directly responsible for the student while undertaking a period of work-based/placement learning.
- Prepare a work programme in consultation with the student and the work-based learning/placement co-ordinator and/or visiting staff.
- Arrange a programme of induction to the workplace for the student, and continue to provide sufficient instruction to maximize the effectiveness of the learning opportunity.
- Arrange regular meetings with the student to discuss and monitor progress.
- Complete assessment/evaluation documentation as required.
- Notify the work-based/placement Learning co-ordinator of any problems which may arise.
- Meet with visiting university staff to discuss student progress.

2.2.5 Clinical Supervisor - Designated person responsible for supervising students on clinical placements.

Clinical Supervisor should:

- Adhere to 2.2.4 above and in addition:
- Ensure that all of the above are compliant with professional body accreditation and Fitness to Practise.

2.2.6 Host Research Supervisor - Designated person responsible for supervising students on a study or research placement.

Host Research Supervisor should:

- Adhere to 2.2.4 above and in addition:
- Ensure the provision of necessary facilities (e.g. computing, laboratory).

2.2.7 Student - Student who is enrolled on or interested in undertaking a period of Work-Based/Placement Learning.

Student is responsible for:

- Accessing the assistance, resources and information provided by relevant staff in the academic School, Careers, Employability and Skills (CES) and any other appropriate University staff to find their own work-based or placement learning opportunity.
- Ensuring that they seek approval from the appropriate individual in the School/Unit once they have secured their work-based/placement learning opportunity. Failure to do so may result in the placement not being recognized.
- Informing the appropriate individual in the School/Unit of any health issues, including any disability or other special circumstances, which may affect their work-based/placement learning opportunity.
- Ensuring that all required documentation is submitted prior to, during and at the end of the work-based/placement learning opportunity by the required date.

- Complying with the host provider's terms and conditions. This includes abiding by all rules and regulations and attendance at any briefings in relation to policy issues; e.g. company Health and Safety Policy.
- Demonstrating personal conduct which upholds and enhances the good standing and reputation of the University.
- Contacting the designated person within the School/Unit if a problem arises.

3. WORK-BASED AND PLACEMENT LEARNING APPROVAL

3.1 Establishing Work-Based and Placement Learning

- Schools/Units should publish their procedures for establishing and managing any work-based/placement learning initiatives required as part of academic programmes.
- It is the responsibility of Schools/Units to ensure that all of their partner institutions/employers reach the required standards outlined in their procedures.
- In developing student work-based/placement learning, the School/Unit should ensure, where appropriate, that the learning content and outcomes accommodate the requirements of any relevant accrediting professional and statutory bodies.
- The programme specification should clearly indicate the contribution of the work-based/placement learning to the learning and assessment process.
- The provision of work-based/placement learning should promote equality of opportunity required under anti-discrimination legislation. Where required, advice should be sought from the University's Diversity and Inclusion Team or Disability Services. (See section 10)
- Where appropriate, there should be a formal written agreement between the provider and the School/Unit. Agreements will vary depending on the nature of the activity.
- Regular contact between University staff and providers is essential to ensure successful work-based/placement learning. It is recommended that Schools/Units should have a work-based learning/placement coordinator who is responsible for oversight and management of all work-based/placement learning activities.
- It is recommended that providers should be visited by the work-based/placement learning coordinator, ideally while a student is present, to review successes and/or to discuss any concerns. Professional courses may have specific requirements in this regard. The School/Unit should have a clear policy relating to the frequency of such visits. (See section 6)
- As part of their Programme Reviews, Schools/Units should regularly review their range of work-based/placement learning providers, to ensure that high standards of academic quality and support are maintained.

4. PREPARATION FOR STUDENTS PRIOR TO WORK-BASED AND PLACEMENT LEARNING

4.1 If the work-based/placement learning experience is to be meaningful, students must be able to learn from it. The learning can be extremely relevant to an individual's chosen career path. Reflective learning materials should be a key feature of preparation. Students should be advised about sources of information/help available to them from Careers, Employability and Skills, International Student Support, Learning Development Service, Academic Affairs, Graduate School, Disability Services and Student **Wellbeing**. (See section 11)

4.1.1 Schools/Units should develop preparation for work-based/placement learning to:

- Ensure that students are aware of the range of work-based/placement learning opportunities.
- Illustrate how work-based/placement learning contributes to the development of career management and transferable skills.
- Develop student awareness of the skills, qualities and abilities employers seek and how these are measured.
- Provide knowledge about recruitment and selection processes for selection for work-based/placement learning and ultimately graduate recruitment.
- Provide the opportunities for students to meet and interact with work-based/placement learning providers.
- Ensure that students are aware of Health and Safety arrangements, ethical considerations, confidentiality and Intellectual Property Rights.
- Provide the opportunity for all students to address individual issues; for example, advice on disclosure of disability. (See section 10)

5. SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS UNDERTAKING WORK-BASED AND PLACEMENT LEARNING

5.1 It is recommended that students have the following information before the period of work-based/placement learning commences:

- The name of the Work-Based/Placement Co-ordinator in the Academic School or Unit who is responsible for managing work-based/placement learning.
- The name and contact details of an initial contact at the host placement location.
- Information about support available to the student from the Academic School or Unit which should include information on contact staff and the frequency and type of contact.
- Named contact persons should have clear and explicit roles and responsibilities of which students should be made aware.
- Students and providers should be made aware that the University support services are available for students should they encounter difficulties while undertaking a period of work-based/placement learning. (See section 11)

5.1.1 In the case of clinical placements students should be made aware of the policies and procedures relevant to their work-based learning environment.

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF WORK-BASED AND PLACEMENT LEARNING

6.1 It is recommended that Schools/Units have a local policy in relation to monitoring and maintaining contact with students while undertaking work-based/placement learning. Where possible, appropriate and feasible, it is recommended that students are visited at the work-based/placement learning location. However it is recognised that this may not always be possible.

The number of visits/points of contact will depend on the duration of, and location of, the placement and should be conducted in line with School/Unit policy.

6.2 It is recommended that work-based learning/placement learning monitoring policy statements should:

- Ensure regular points of contact by whatever means appropriate; i.e. visits, Skype calls etc
- Ensure that all contact with students is documented for monitoring purposes in line with GDPR.
- Ensure that all staff involved in visiting students are afforded time to conduct visits and are aware of their roles and responsibilities. (See Section 2.2.3)
- Seek confirmation that work-based/placement learning providers have appropriate Health and Safety procedures in place consistent with the requirements of the [University's Guidance on Student Placement](#).
- Ensure that staff responsible for work-based/placement learning comply with the [University's Tier 4 Student Attendance Monitoring Policy](#).
- Contain a procedure to be undertaken, on a case by case basis, if a student is asked to leave a placement, or if additional problems arise; for example, harassment, conflict. Consideration should also be given to at what stage issues should be referred to [Academic and Student Affairs](#)

6.3 Visits to Placements outside the UK

- It is recommended that students in this category should be visited where possible, appropriate and feasible. However, if not considered feasible the use of technology may support an engagement; e.g. Skype. Alternatively, the School/Unit may choose to nominate a person of appropriate standing in the country of placement to act on its behalf in visiting the student.

6.4 Evaluation of Work-Based and Placement Learning

- The effectiveness of work based/placement learning should be tested through individual Schools/Units internal evaluation procedures and through the Programme Review process. The use of questionnaires and other evaluation techniques should be made clear to students, including feedback to those who completed them and the subsequent use of results.
- Schools/Units should evaluate the progress and experience of students on placement from different perspectives; for example, international students and students with a disability. Where required, advice should be sought from [International Student Support](#) or [Disability Services](#).
- Feedback from host providers should be used to inform the evaluation and review of work-based/placement learning and to inform future practice.

7. ASSESSMENT

- Assessment associated with work-based/placement learning should comply with the 10 principles outlined in the [University Assessment Policy](#)
- Any summative assessment should be aligned to the intended learning outcomes of the programme of work-related/placement learning.
- Schools/Units should ensure that assessment procedures are clear, conform to the overall assessment strategy of the academic programme and can be quality assured.

- Students should be made aware before the commencement of a period of work-based/placement learning whether the experience will contribute to their final degree classification and how it will be assessed. It is recommended that Schools/Units provide a written statement on how work-based/placement learning is assessed.
- In situations where the provider is involved in assessing the student, appropriate guidance should be provided by the School/Unit to ensure quality assurance.
- In addition to academic credit, Schools/Units should give consideration to other forms of accreditation; e.g. an award by a professional awarding body linked to their discipline or Degree Plus. Students should be encouraged to participate as appropriate.

8. REFLECTION ON COMPLETION OF PLACEMENT

8.1 Providing the opportunity for students to give feedback on their return from a period of work-based/placement learning is an important element of the learning process both for the student and for the University. It is an indication of the importance the University places on the experience. It also assists students to reflect on their personal achievements and could be incorporated into post-placement assignments, learning logs or other personal development records.

8.1.2 It is recommended that Schools/Units establish a process to ensure:

- All returning students are asked to provide feedback to their School/Unit on their work-based/placement learning experience, through questionnaires, group meetings or interviews. It is recommended that this should include a reflection one year on from the placement.
- Students are enabled to reflect on the value of their work-based/placement learning experience in the context of their degree programmes and lifelong learning.
- Opportunities are provided for returning students to share their experiences with outgoing students in terms of academic and practical arrangements relating to work-based/placement learning. The methods could include presentations, student-lead information sessions, student profiles and the use of social media.

9. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- Literature provided to students, providers and staff should clearly indicate procedures for dealing with complaints from any party involved in work-based/placement learning.
- Accurate records should be kept by Schools/Units of complaints for monitoring purposes in line with GDPR.
- Documentation should outline the method by which complaints may be referred to the Work-Based/Placement Learning Co-ordinator.
- From the student perspective, advice and complaint forms may be obtained from [Academic and Student Affairs](#)
- Schools/Units should act swiftly on problems raised by students, providers or the Work-Based/Placement Learning Co-ordinator.

- Where a student's period of work-based/placement learning is terminated early, guidelines should be issued to students and providers regarding available support and guidance and should also include reference to appropriate contacts in the University.

10. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Schools/Units should show commitment to:

- Seeking specialist advice and guidance on disability employment rights. [Disability Services](#)
- Positively encourage students with disabilities to disclose their disability to ensure their support needs can be taken into consideration at each stage of the work-based learning/placement process.
- Providing guidance for students on requesting reasonable adjustments during recruitment and selection and while undertaking work-based learning/placement.
- Providing guidance for students about providers who are committed to promoting equality of opportunity in selection and recruitment for people with disabilities.
- Providing guidance for students about providers who proactively seek to recruit underrepresented groups or who specifically target or welcome applications from 'neurodiverse' candidates.
- Providing information about external sources of disability support and resources that will assist students with disabilities to search for work-based/placement learning opportunities, apply for jobs and prepare for interviews.
- Promoting positive attitudes towards students with disabilities in the work place by working towards dispelling disability stereotypes, tackling stigma and promoting disability awareness the workplace.

11. OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The following links contain useful advice and information relating to work-based and placement learning:

[Work-Related Learning Community of Practice](#)

[Academic and Student Affairs](#)

[International Student Support](#)

[Disability Services.](#)

1. International Placements

Schools should be aware of the following:

- Credit Transfer: Where the placement is at an EU partner university, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) enables transfer of credits between different country systems.
- Living Abroad: Students should be provided with appropriate advice on the customs and culture of the country in question including any health requirements.

2. Language Requirements

If the language is not English:

Inform students of preparatory classes well in advance. In the case of a study placement, if a student is required to undertake assessment in a language other than English, this must be made clear in the Learning Agreement. Early liaison between Schools and the Language Centre is encouraged.

If the language is English:

Where the experience will be in English but the principal language of the country is not, Schools must ensure students are equipped sufficiently to participate in a social context. Early liaison between Schools and the Language Centre is encouraged.

3. Documentation

In addition, each student will be required to complete the following documents which will be provided with the Conditions of Participation:

- Learning Agreement listing areas of study or types of course or work placement to be followed while at the host institution.
- A Confirmation of Arrival form which the student undertakes to sign and return to the University following arrival at the host location.
- A Health and Safety checklist which the student must undertake to complete within two weeks.
- Contact numbers in case of emergency.
- If required a mark report sheet which student should give to each course tutor at the host provider.
- A Confirmation of Completion notification form.

4. Assessment of Study Abroad

- A full year spent on study placement as an integral full-time part of a degree programme will normally attract 120 (undergraduate) or 180 (taught postgraduate) CATS points, awarded on the basis of assessments carried out during the year and/or a subsequent assessment carried out on a student's return. Placements of a shorter duration will attract credit points on a pro-rata basis.

- All study placements which are an integral element of a degree programme must attract a mark or set of marks which may include the following: marks for examinations/assessments undertaken during the placement; marks for assessments undertaken on return; and/or marks for any additional work undertaken by the student as part of the syllabus (for example, a learning journal). Where the placement provider does not directly assess a student's placement, the School should clearly explain the process for assessment.
- Where a study placement is a formal part of the curriculum it may contribute to the final award for the degree programme. Its weighting within a School or degree programme's assessment criteria for the final award should be supplied within the Programme Specification and School Regulations.
- Results of study and work placements, and converted marks where applicable, should be recorded on the student's academic record.

5. Conversion of Marks/Grade

- Marks awarded to students by a partner institution abroad should be converted to the assessment system normally used by a School as long as the conversion criteria are consistent for all students. The conversion criteria must be approved by the University. (Advice may be sought from CES.) Marks or grades arising from international study placements are likely to originate from one of two sources:
 - Institutions operating the European Credit Transfer System: Schools should ensure that there is a clear process for converting the ECTS grades of their partner institutions into marks compatible with the existing QUB marking schemes.
 - Non-EU Partner Institutions: Schools should ensure that their students are assessed locally and appropriate conversion schemes developed to process the assessment results received from the partner institution. Schools must ensure that the conversion schemes adopted allow parity of treatment among students on similar pathways attending different institutions.
- Details of the assessment and mark/grade conversion schemes should be made available for monitoring by the external examiners.
- For international study placements, Schools should have in place a system to deal with appeals from students against a) the marks awarded by the partner institution for study placement; and b) the marks awarded to the student after conversion