



**UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM**

**CODE OF PRACTICE ON PLACEMENT LEARNING**

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Code applies to all Registered Students, but does not apply to students who are on Leave of Absence. For the definition of what constitutes a Leave of Absence, refer to the Code of Practice on Leave of Absence Procedures.
- 1.2 Schools may already have extensive procedures in place for the management of placement learning. This Code of Practice is intended to complement such procedures, and provides the minimum requirements for the management of placement learning.
- 1.3 The Code of Practice does not cover learning outside the institution that is not a planned part of a programme of study, such as part-time work, work during a term, and vacation work which students have arranged for themselves.
- 1.4 Throughout this document, the word “Schools” may apply to Departments or even individual programmes.
- 1.5 This Code of Practice applies to placements of a year in length. The extent to which these provisions should be applied to placements of less than a year will be scalable, depending on the length and type of placement activity, however, it is the expectation that these principles will be applied to some degree when placement activity is proposed and reviewed.
- 1.6 More information about this Code is available in the Guidance Note on Placement Learning.

### Scope

- 1.7 This Code covers placement learning within the following broad programme categories:
  - (a) *Study abroad*: i.e. programmes which include a year abroad either in place of or in addition to a year that would normally be spent at Birmingham. This category incorporates international exchanges.
  - (b) *Industrial Placement/Work Abroad (including work based learning and professional experience)*: i.e. programmes which incorporate a year in industry in the UK or abroad either in place of or in addition to a year that would normally be spent at Birmingham.
  - (c) *Professional and clinical experience placements (UK or international)*: i.e. programmes which include industrial, clinical or professional placements as part of their programme requirements leading to professional qualifications (for example, MBChB, BNurs, Initial Teacher Training, BA & MA Social Work).

## 2. Placement Learning: Programme Approval and Content



2.1 The University, through the Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education Policy and Academic Standards) on behalf of the Quality, Enhancement, and Standards Committee (QESC), is responsible for approving proposals for placement learning opportunities in programmes of study.

2.2 Strategic Fit of the Placement

Schools should consider any potential reputational risks that might arise from the relationship with organisations or institutions at which students may be placed.

2.3 Restrictions on Provision of Placement Learning opportunities

*International Students with Visa Requirements*

- (a) Schools should consider carefully the implications for international students with visa requirements when considering the addition of a placement to an existing programme of study or when considering a new programme with placement provision to ensure that placement learning opportunities offered to international students with visa requirements meet the Home Office requirement (see guidance document for further information).

*Additional language or skills preparation*

- (b) Schools should consider carefully the level of written and oral linguistic competence required before a student is permitted to undertake a placement. This will clearly vary depending on whether or not modules taken overseas will contribute towards the Birmingham degree.

*Quota*

- (c) Schools should also take into consideration whether they wish to place any restrictions on participation of students on a placement opportunity. For example, the placement opportunity may be limited by numbers, and Schools may wish to restrict participation in an optional placement year to students who have achieved a certain mark in specific modules, or who have achieved a specified overall year mark. Any such restrictions will be specified in the programme requirements and agreed by Senate or under delegated authority.

2.4 Assessment, Progress and Monitoring

- (a) The assessment of placement learning should be subject to the usual School procedures for internal moderation and external examining, and standards applied to assessment of placement learning must be consistent with QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and other reference points, such as the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. If the placement learning forms a substantial part of the module credit, the learning outcomes should be identified and the assessment test whether these agreed outcomes have been achieved.

- (b) Programmes which do not require assessment throughout the placement period should have an alternative means of monitoring the academic progress of students on placement to ensure that they are on track for achieving the learning outcomes.
- (c) Feedback Mechanisms – Schools should ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place so that students receive feedback during their period on placement.

## 2.5 Credit Transfer

When proposing a programme or module involving placement learning in another academic institution which involves the transfer of credit from the placement institution to Birmingham, the School shall need to ensure that the level of the modules is comparable with the Birmingham modules they replace; that workload is appropriate (60 ECTS credits corresponds to one year of full time study in the European Credit Transfer Scheme) and that the module content is comparable. The modules students are allowed to take for credit must contribute to a coherent programme of study and enable students to be prepared for modules they will take when they return to Birmingham.

## 3. Placement Management

### 3.1 Support Available to Students on Placements

- (a) In most cases, placement students continue to be registered at Birmingham, and therefore have access to student support services available within the University.
- (b) Schools should designate one or more specific member(s) of staff to manage placements (the “Placement Learning Co-ordinator” or “Exchanges Tutor”). In some cases it may be appropriate to have a Placement Learning Co-ordinator for an individual programme of study, particularly where a programme of study spans more than one School.

### 3.2 Interruption of Placement

Should a placement provider or an overseas institution be unable to host a student, through no fault of the student, the School, in collaboration with appropriate Professional Services colleagues, will make all reasonable endeavours to arrange an alternative placement provider, or provide an alternative mode of learning and assessment that is pedagogically appropriate, or advise the student in regard to the Code of Practice on Extenuating Circumstances.

### 3.3 Insurance

- (a) When planning a new placement learning opportunity, Schools should give careful consideration to insurance matters, particularly in cases where students may be placed in an environment which has particular associated risks. Schools should ask any new prospective placement provider to complete the Placement Provider’s Declaration (see guidance document for further information) and should keep a copy of this within the student file. In case of any queries, these should be directed to the Insurance Office at <https://servicenow.bham.ac.uk/finance>.



- (b) Students should be provided with copies of the summary of cover and contact information in case of emergency. A copy of the summary of cover with contact details can be downloaded from the Insurance Office website:  
<https://servicenow.bham.ac.uk/finance>.
- (c) Schools should make students aware of their obligations in respect of ensuring that they are properly insured. In order to be covered by the University's Insurance Policy, students must complete student registration or re-registration with the University of Birmingham as well as their host institution at the start of each academic session. Insurance cover will not start until the date that the student registers. More information can be found in the Guidance, Appendix 5.
- (d) Schools should establish in advance of the placement what status students will have; e.g. if a placement is in an organization, whether they will be treated as a member of staff for insurance purposes; and ensure that students are informed of any conditions of their status.

### 3.4 Work Placements

- (a) Prior to students commencing on a work placement, Schools should write to the placement provider confirming the placement, and setting out a record of the responsibilities of the placement provider, University (School) and student. Schools should ensure that the placement provider is made aware of the University's Regulations pertaining Intellectual Property<sup>1</sup>. During discussions with placement providers, Schools should discuss the ownership of intellectual property created by students and arising from their studies. If the placement provider is not willing to grant ownership of rights to any intellectual property to the student and the University, including royalties arising from patents, Schools should confirm that the student has been made aware of this situation and that they are content to waive this right.
- (b) Schools should also establish what will happen if the student is dismissed by the placement provider, or suspended from the placement, and ensure that the student understands the impact that this will have on their programme of study.

## 4. **Health and Safety**

- 4.1 The [University's Health and Safety Policy](#) extends to student activities away from University premises including student placements. The Policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of staff with respect to Health and Safety, including Heads of School. In particular, the Head of School, in liaison with the Placement Learning Co-ordinator, must ensure that: appropriate arrangements are agreed and in place for University staff/students working in premises not under the sole control of the University; and appropriate arrangements are in place for student placements;

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation 5.4



- 4.2 The University has a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that students are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. Health and safety considerations should therefore follow a risk based approach.
- 4.3 Schools should ensure that a risk assessment has been carried out for any new placement learning opportunity, including appropriate investigations being made into the health and safety arrangements in place for the learning/ working environment.
- 4.4 Some placements will be set up as part of an exchange agreement that has already been arranged by the Birmingham Global Study Abroad Team. In these cases, it may not be necessary for Schools to conduct risk assessments. In order to establish whether a risk assessment needs to be carried out, Schools should discuss with the Birmingham Global Study Abroad Team what health and safety checks were undertaken as part of the set-up of the agreement, and whether these should be reviewed. Where sufficient health and safety checks have already been carried out by Birmingham Global, the School should indicate this on the "Proposal to add a placement" form.
- 4.5 The necessity for a site visits extends to most placement learning opportunities. It is acknowledged, however, that in some circumstances it may be unrealistic or inappropriate for a site visit to be undertaken. In such cases, the risk assessment should be carried out on the basis of the information available. If there are reasonable concerns regarding the safety of students on the placement following the risk assessment, it may be necessary for the School to reconsider undertaking a site visit. In cases where the School does not carry out a site visit on the basis that it is not reasonably practical, it should record the reasoning for this on the Risk Assessment Form (see Guidance).
- 4.6 The University reserves the right to withdraw permission for, to postpone, or terminate and recall students from, a placement or a period of study abroad where, in its judgement, there is a risk to personal safety and/or wellbeing. In such instances the University will make all reasonable endeavours to arrange a suitable alternative or provide an alternative mode of learning and assessment that is pedagogically appropriate, or advise the student in regard to the Code of Practice on Extenuating Circumstances.

## **5. Placement Learning: Review**

- 5.1 The University, through the Quality, Enhancement, and Standards Committee (QESC), is responsible for ensuring the quality and standards of placement learning through oversight of the Annual Review process.
- 5.2 Schools should review their placement provision as part of the Annual Review process. Assessment of placement modules should be subject to scrutiny by External Examiners in line with University policy. Further information regarding the Annual Review and External



Examiners processes is available from the appropriate College Academic Policy Partner ([College Academic Policy Partners \(CAPPs\)](#))

- 5.3 There should also be mechanisms in place to solicit feedback from current and former students, placement providers and external examiners to ensure the quality and standards of a placement. Where appropriate, the feedback should be shared with the next student(s) to go on the placement.

## **6. Induction and Preparation**

- 6.1 Schools are responsible for providing students with detailed information appropriate to their placement learning before the placement learning commences – both via written guidance and briefing meetings.

- 6.2 Briefing meetings should ideally involve students who have already completed placements previously and incoming exchange students from the relevant countries and institutions.

### **6.3 Health and Safety**

- (a) Schools should inform students, where appropriate, of the need to check immunization requirements for the country of placement. These should be checked with student's individual doctors as requirements change regularly and depend on the region, not just country, to be visited.
- (b) Schools should also make student's aware of the student's responsibility for health and safety; what to do if the placement provider expects students to do work they consider hazardous or beyond their physical capacity; the role of trade union appointed safety representatives.

### **6.4 Financial Implications**

Schools should make students aware of the financial implications of placement when selecting the programme or how they will spend the year. In addition to statutory support, students on a year in industry/placement and paying full fees are eligible for the Birmingham Grant and Scholarship, if they meet the current criteria. Students on a year abroad are not eligible for the Birmingham Grant or Scholarship. More information can be obtained from the Student Funding Office: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/student/financial-support/index.aspx>

### **6.5 Students on International exchanges**

Students undertaking an international exchange are required to attend a pre-departure group briefing organised by the Birmingham Global Study Abroad Team. These are either organised on a country/regional basis, or in conjunction with the relevant School to a cohort of students.



#### 6.6 International students with visa requirements

Where appropriate, students should be made aware of the University's International Student Team (IST) which provides a wide range of support to international students, including, but not restricted to the following:

- (a) Advice, guidance and information on student visas (UK entry clearance visas and extension of leave to remain in the UK);
- (b) Advice, guidance and information on student dependant visas (UK entry clearance and extensions).

#### 6.7 Students with a disability

***Schools are under an anticipatory obligation to ensure that appropriate placement provision is available for disabled students***

If any individualized arrangements are required by a disability or other condition, students should be advised to consult the University's Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS). This may mean that an existing Reasonable Adjustments Plan may require alteration to take into account specific situations on the placement. In such cases, the Student, School and DLSS should agree the necessary amendments with the placement provider in advance of the placement.

If, exceptionally, a disabled student is unable to undertake an appropriate placement the School and the student must discuss this with Student Services at the earliest opportunity.

### 7. **Leaving Placement Learning before Completion**

- 7.1 If a student contacts the School wanting to leave the placement due to non-medical reasons, they must be made informed of the academic consequences (and where relevant financial consequences) of failing to complete the placement. The student should consult with their Personal Academic Tutor and the Placement Learning Co-ordinator for their School, and where appropriate, the Wellbeing Officer and/or Year Co-ordinator.
- 7.2 If the student must leave the placement due to medical reasons, the student's Personal Academic Tutor, and the Placement Learning Co-ordinator (and where appropriate, the Wellbeing Officer and/or Year Co-ordinator) should be informed. All students travelling abroad for their placement are automatically covered by the University's insurance policy, providing that they register at the start of each Academic Session and do not participate in activities which would invalidate the policy<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Students are not covered for curtailment due to Covid-19 but they will be covered for medical issues while abroad.



- 7.3 In either of the above situations the School should maintain contact with the placement provider and the student.

## **8. Responsibilities of Students**

- 8.1 Schools should impress upon students their role as representatives of the University and responsibilities towards placement providers, customers, clients, patients and employees. This is generally mandated by professional body requirements for programmes subject to Fitness to Practise requirements and is good practice in all placement learning contexts.
- 8.2 Schools should inform students of their responsibilities for managing both their own learning and professional relationships, recording progress and achievements and for alerting the placement provider and University to problems with the placement as soon as possible.
- 8.3 Students have a responsibility to make themselves aware of the level and content of any modules that they will be studying whilst on their placement year, as well as ensuring that they have received information from their School as to how their placement year will be assessed, and the implications of failure.
- 8.4 Insurance
- (a) All students must ensure that they abide by the terms and conditions of the University's Insurance Policy. In order to be covered by the Policy, it is the responsibility of the Student to re-register at the start of each year. If they do not re-register, they will not be covered by the University's Policy.
  - (b) Students are responsible for ensuring that they have the appropriate level of cover for any activities that they undertake. For example, if the student intends to participate in certain sports, they may be required to take out separate insurance, which they are responsible for paying for.
  - (c) Students are responsible for checking with the host institution if additional insurance is required. For example, American institutions often require extra cover to be taken out in addition to the University of Birmingham's insurance cover. If this is the case, students are advised to contact the Insurance Office for advice at <https://servicenow.bham.ac.uk/finance>. If additional insurance is required, it is the student's responsibility to pay for this.
- 8.5 Health and Safety
- (a) It is the responsibility of students on placements to comply with any instruction given to them by an appropriate supervisor and to bring any questions or problems, particularly those of understanding, to the attention of their supervisor. Participants must acknowledge their own responsibilities for the health and safety of both themselves and others. The authority and responsibilities of any other designated supervisor in relation to safety must be clearly defined and understood by all members of the party.



- (b) It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that they have received the correct vaccinations etc., for the country/area to which they are travelling (and taking account of any increased risk created by the nature of the proposed study experience) in sufficient time for them to be protected on arrival.

#### 8.6 Student Academic Engagement

- (a) The Code of Practice on Student Academic Engagement applies to full-time and part-time students (based in the UK or overseas), and applies to those on placements as part of their programme of study.
- (b) As a Home Office Student Sponsor (previously Tier 4), and in accordance with the Code of Practice on Student Academic Engagement, the University has a duty to ensure that it agrees with the Provider / HEI the nature of how they will collect and submit to the University full absence and attendance information for all Sponsored Students when the student is on a placement. The University must ensure that this information is recorded during the placement.
- (c) It is the responsibility of the student to familiarise themselves with the provisions of this Code of Practice, and they may seek advice and guidance on its interpretation and operation, and its associated procedures, from their School, Registry, or Guild Advice at the Guild of Students.
- (d) The Code of Practice on Student Academic Engagement is available on the [University's Code of Practice, Policies and Guidance pages](#)<sup>3</sup>.

### 9. **Responsibilities of Placement Providers**

- 9.1 Work-based or placement providers should be encouraged to play an active role in the opportunities provided for the student. To support them in this role they need clear information from the Schools about the objectives of the work-based or placement learning, their specific roles and responsibilities, the nature and scope of the activity involved and how responsibilities are to be fulfilled. They will benefit from guidance about their involvement in the procedures for the monitoring of the progress of students and mechanisms for reporting to the awarding institution at the end of the work-based or placement learning opportunity.
- 9.2 A work-based or placement provider may be involved in providing a mentoring or supervising role. The responsibilities of these important roles need to be clearly identified and any training for the mentor or supervisor provided before the student begins the opportunity.

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<sup>3</sup> The Code of Practice on Student Academic Engagement is available on each Cohort Legislation page. Once on the correct Cohort Legislation page the required document can be found in the "Student Support & Student Related (incl. Immigration)" section.



- 9.3 It is good practice to inform the work-based or placement provider about visits from the academic or support staff, and any change(s) in the student's circumstances, in advance of the provision commencing.
- 9.4 Work-based or placement providers find it helpful to have clear information about action to be taken if they are no longer able to offer a work-based or placement learning opportunity or if they have any kind of problem or complaint concerning the conduct of the student.
- 9.5 Once a placement provider has been deemed an appropriate partner for Birmingham, there are three main areas of responsibility of which placement providers need to be aware:

(a) Provision of learning opportunities

Once the level and content of modules and workload is established with a partner institution, it is necessary to ensure that students have access to the modules they require for their degrees. Schools should agree with placement providers the level and content of modules offered and accessibility of modules to UoB students, particularly with regard to the learning outcomes which must be achieved as part of the placement.

Some international exchanges may require a 'Learning Agreement' to be drawn up between both institutions prior to a student's departure. This lists the modules which the student has chosen; confirms that the home institution considers these modules to be appropriate and that the placement provider guarantees their availability.

A Learning Agreement forms a useful safeguard for students and should be seen as a model for placements wherever possible.

In instances where students organise their own placement, it is important that they are aware of the learning outcomes they must meet whilst on the placement.

(b) Role of placement providers in assessment

Although an evaluation of the student by the placement provider may not contribute to degree credit, such an assessment may be valuable as part of the student's personal development.

(c) Role of placement providers in ensuring the Health and Safety of students

Placement providers are responsible for providing a full induction to the student embarking on the placement. The student must be informed of any significant risks and should receive suitable information, instruction, training and supervision. Should the student be expected to work with machinery, equipment or substances hazardous to health, safety precautions must be taken, first aid facilities must be available, training, supervision and protective equipment and clothing must be provided, and emergency procedures must be communicated to the student.

- 9.6 Placement providers are responsible for making any reasonable adjustments which are recommended as part of a Reasonable Adjustments Plan (see section 6.7).



- 9.7 The Placement Provider and University must agree how absence and attendance information is collected for International Students (see 8.6).