

University code of practice on work-based and placement learning

[Approved by the University Board for Teaching and Learning on 30 April 2012.]

General Principles

- 1 This University *Code of practice on placement learning* has been drawn up to advise staff, students and placement provider. This document closely aligns with the section of the QAA *Quality Code B3: Learning and Teaching, Section 2 Work-based and placement learning* (2011).
- 2 Placement Learning is defined as:

‘the learning achieved during an agreed and negotiated period of learning that takes place outside the institution at which the full or part-time student is enrolled or engaged in learning. As with work-based learning, the learning outcomes are intended as integral parts of a programme of study.’ (QAA *Quality Code on Work-based and placement learning*)
- 3 Such ‘placements’ may therefore include:
 - Study at another higher education institution, whether or not within the United Kingdom, as part of a degree programme;
 - Periods of ‘School Experience’ as part of BA(Ed) degree programmes;
 - A work placement, whether or not within the United Kingdom, as part of a degree programme. This may take the form of a Placement Opportunity (PO) which is: a) part of a module, b) a whole module, c) a year in industry, or, additionally in the case of a language programme, a school assistantship.

The procedures in this document relate to all placements described above.

- 4 This Code of Practice does **not** cover learning outside the University which is not part of a planned programme of study, such as part-time, term-time and vacation work which students have arranged for themselves.
- 5 In this document, ‘Placement Co-ordinator’ describes those members of staff in each School, Department or working centrally who are responsible for academic and work placements.

Responsibilities for academic standards and quality

Programme Design and Programme Specifications

- 6 In developing programmes which include an element of placement learning, Schools should reflect on the placement opportunities they intend to provide and ensure that the programme aims and learning outcomes appropriately reflect the contribution that the placement makes. Scrutiny Panels convened to consider relevant new programme initiatives will wish to be satisfied that this is the case. The University's guidance on *Approval of a new Programme* gives further details:

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/qualitysupport/approvalnewprog.pdf>

- 7 Schools should also take into consideration relevant Subject Benchmarking Statements and, where appropriate, the requirements of professional bodies.
- 8 In drawing up programme specifications for relevant programmes, Schools should include 'a brief statement on opportunities for students to study in another country or on placements', as required in the University's *Guidelines on producing Undergraduate Programme Specifications*:
- 9 An alternative / default option to the placement should be put in place for students who fail to secure or undertake a placement due to disability, sickness or other extenuating circumstances agreed by the module convenor.

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/ugprogspec.pdf>.

Student Progression onto Placements

- 10 The University would normally allow individuals who fail part two exams at first attempt, to progress onto their placement. In the case of a maxi placement option, employers may choose to commence, defer or terminate the placement. It is the student's responsibility to negotiate suitable time off with their placement provider to revise and resit. If the student progresses with the placement, but fails at second attempt, the placement provider reserves the right to terminate the contract of employment with the student, as they will no longer be enrolled as a student at the University. Students who have chosen mini or micro placements may wish to discuss alternative options with their Schools/Departments. Students must notify their employer if they have failed Part 2 exams at the first attempt.

Assessment of Placement Learning

- 11 Schools and Departments should ensure that the assessment of any period of placement is appropriate to that placement and allows students to demonstrate their ability to meet relevant learning outcomes.
- 12 Schools should ensure, so far as is practicable, that assessment procedures for programmes which include a placement element comply with the University's

Code of Practice on the Assessment of Taught Programmes
(<http://www.reading.ac.uk/Exams/cpat.pdf>) and with the University's *Code of Practice on the External Examining of Taught Programmes*
<http://www.reading.ac.uk/Exams/cpee.pdf>.

- 13 However, it is accepted that in relation to language placements overseas it will not be possible for assessments provided by foreign universities to be moderated either by members of the University staff or by External Examiners. It is one of the principles of the European Credit Transfer Scheme that assessments provided by a host institution must be accepted as reliable by the home university.

Approving and allocating placements

- 14 In many cases, Schools have long-standing arrangements with their placement providers, based on mutual understanding and effective co-operation, and these will be monitored and evaluated following the procedures below. However, where a placement opportunity with a new provider is being developed, Schools will need to ensure the following:
- that learning opportunities are provided which enable the intended learning outcomes of the placement element and the degree programme as a whole to be achieved;
 - that students undertaking a placement with the particular provider can be appropriately supported; and
 - that assurance is sought in relation to compliance with health and safety legislation
- 154 In a small number of cases relating to industrial placements overseas, students should be made aware that although such placements are offered, staff have only limited contacts with appropriate placement providers and therefore such placements cannot be guaranteed;
- 16 Where appropriate, Schools should develop placement opportunities which comply with the requirements of the Teacher Training Authority, the Erasmus schemes, and other relevant professional and statutory bodies;
- 17 International Students studying on a programme which includes an industrial placement element in the United Kingdom do **not** need a work permit for that placement if it is a necessary part of their studies.
- Tier 4 sponsored International Students studying on a programme which includes a work placement element in the United Kingdom do **not** need a work permit for that placement if it is a necessary and assessed part of their studies.

- Tier 4 sponsored International students studying on a programme which includes a work placement element outside of the United Kingdom will need to satisfy the entry requirements of the host country as usual and may need to be advised to seek immigration advice as appropriate.
- Tier 4 sponsored International students must not undertake a work placement that is more than 33% of the total length of their course or more than 50% of the total length of the course where the course is at NQF/QCF 6 and is studied at a higher education institution or where the course forms part of a study abroad programme (unless there is a UK statutory requirement that states otherwise – for example a PGCE course and teaching practice).
- If a UK statutory requirement exists stating work placement length must be over UKBA limit then documentary evidence of UK statutory requirement must be readily available should UKBA make a request.

Staff Responsibilities

- 18 Each School which is responsible for programmes involving an element of placement learning should designate at least one appropriate member of staff to act as the Placement Co-ordinator for these programmes;
- 19 The Placement Co-ordinator, alongside the Central Placement Officer responsible for their School/Faculty (see <http://www.reading.ac.uk/seecc/placements/support.asp>), will be responsible for:
 - evaluating and approving placement opportunities, for all students including those with special needs;
 - liaising with placement providers, as appropriate;
 - providing information to students on potential placement providers;
 - providing a briefing/induction to students before they leave for their placement (see section on Information, Support and Guidance below);
 - editing a Placement Handbook for all relevant students;
 - ensuring that appropriate staff are in contact with students on placements and ensuring that student progress is monitored via the RISIS placement module;
 - keeping a record of student contact details (for students studying overseas, such details should also be supplied to the Reading International Office);
 - debriefing students after they return to the University;
 - carrying out an annual evaluation of placement opportunities;

- Tier 4 sponsored International students need to be monitored by Schools/Departments and regular recorded contact with students on placements is required whether through a Placements Officer or through other relevant officers/staff in Schools/Departments;
- Placement providers must notify the University if a Tier 4 sponsored International student is absent for 10 consecutive working days via the Placements Officer or other relevant officers/staff in Schools/Departments. If a genuine reason for the absence of a particular student with evidence cannot be established upon further investigation by the School/Department the relevant officer/staff within the School/Department must inform the International Student Adviser as soon as possible who will then make a report to the UKBA as a student missing an expected contact;
- Once a work placement has been agreed for a sponsored student, the relevant School/Department must inform the International Student Adviser so they can inform the UKBA of the student's work placement details i.e. name of employer and address;
- If further advice is needed please contact the Placement and Development Manager, SEECC in the first instance.

Responsibilities of Placement Provider

20 Partners have a number of responsibilities and it will be necessary for Schools to liaise with partners to ensure:

- the provision of relevant learning opportunities;
- their role, where appropriate, in the assessment of students is undertaken correctly. In this regard, Schools should provide appropriate information for placement providers which enables them to fulfil any responsibilities in relation to assessment;
- the duty of care including the health and safety of students is understood and acted upon by the placement provider;
- the University does not allow Tier 4 sponsored students to attend placement providers who are unable or unwilling to agree to report absences back to the University.

Responsibilities and Entitlement of Students

- 21 Students have the responsibility to meet the norms and expectations of a given professional occupation and in many cases it would be useful if these were documented by the employer. This may include elements of IPR and client confidentiality. Students need to be made aware of their entitlement in regards to working hours, holidays and conditions of employment. The University will make students aware of the conduct it expects from its students whilst on placement. In some cases it will be useful to put in place a learning agreement agreed to by the University, the employer and the student.

Student Complaints

- 22 Any complaints by students relating to their placement should be dealt with in accordance with the University's Student Complaints Procedure:

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/qualitysupport/studentcomplaints.pdf>

SECC are responsible for checking compliance of placement operations and adherence to the Placement Codes of Practice across the University (e.g. duty of care) but the School is ultimately responsible for the management of all aspects of their placement programme. If schools are found not to be undertaking the recommended placement operations, discussions will be had with those responsible, e.g. module convener.

- 23 Students should be made aware in the placement documentation that they should raise complaints initially with the relevant Placement Co-ordinator.
- 24 Where students on a placement have a concern about the standards of practice adopted by the placement provider they should, in the first instance, contact their Head of School.

Students with disabilities

- 25 Schools should, wherever possible, provide placement opportunities which are inclusive and available to all students, whether disabled or non-disabled;
- 26 As soon as they are informed that a student with a disability is to study on a programme with a placement element, Schools should determine whether placement opportunities are available which would be accessible to the student, and, if not, explore all reasonable adjustments that can be made to make placement opportunities a possibility. Schools should, however, also make it clear to such students that placements will be provided within the discretion of the School and the placement provider, taking into consideration that certain students may not have complete freedom of choice with regard to placement location, particularly where the physical environment makes it impossible;

- 27 Schools should discuss the requirements of disabled students with placement providers before allocating placements and should monitor the appropriateness of a placement location in the end of placement evaluation forms.

Information, Support and Guidance

- 28 Schools should provide brief details of placement opportunities for applicants, both in their own literature and on their websites. Such information is also required to be included in relevant programme handbooks;
- 29 Schools should provide a briefing/induction to all students before they leave for their placement. This induction should cover:
- Programme requirements for the placement, including any requirements relating to progress reports or assessments;
 - An introduction to the placement environment, including cultural orientation (where appropriate), work expectations, and health and safety information;
 - Students' responsibilities both as a representative of the University and also towards the placement provider. This should also include responsibility for alerting the placement provider and the University to any problems with the placement which might prevent satisfactory progress or completion;
 - Any legal or ethical considerations, such as client or patient confidentiality;
 - Availability of any additional language or skills preparation;
 - Insurance cover;
 - Institutional and School/Department support services available to students on placements, including contact details of appropriate staff.
- 30 As part of any briefing, students should be made aware of the consequences for their degree programme (and for their subsequent career, in the case of professionally accredited programmes) of any failure to successfully complete the placement. In cases of extenuating circumstances where the placement option could not be completed, students should be given alternative options;
- 31 Schools should also provide a Placement Handbook for all relevant students, covering the above information;
- 32 Schools should, as part of any debriefing of students on their return to the University at the end of the placement period, provide an appropriate re-orientation to their degree programme.

Placement Provider

- 33 Such responsibilities should be set down in writing and, where possible, a formal agreement or contact should be drawn up. Students studying abroad under the Erasmus scheme are required to have a 'learning agreement' signed by an appropriate member of staff;
- 34 In the case of industrial placements, there may not be a set group of placement providers who are used each year. Relevant Schools may therefore wish to draw up a generic document which could be used by a range of providers.

Staff Development

- 35 Each School is responsible for the staff development of its Placement staff, and should recognise the importance of their role, and of staff development in this area. Schools should ensure that:
- Placement staff are aware of CSTD training available;
 - Placement staff are aware of the Placement Tutors' Community of Practice which offers the opportunity to correspond with other Placement staff within the University. <http://www.reading.ac.uk/seecc/staff-only/placements/>

Monitoring and Evaluation

- 36 The Placement Co-ordinator will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate staff are in contact with students on placements and that their progress is monitored, both by the School/Department, central Placement and Development Team in SEECC where necessary and by the placement provider;
- 37 Placement Co-ordinators should ensure that wherever possible, students on a placement are visited at least once by an appropriate member of staff. Only in certain circumstance will students not be visited, such as a short placement period or due to geographical location or where the placement is deemed to be 'low risk' - see placement health and safety handbook. In these cases, the Placement Co-ordinator will be responsible for making alternative arrangements for regular contact and monitoring of progress;
- 38 Where a placement is terminated due to misconduct on the part of a student, the case will be considered in accordance with the University's *Regulations for Conduct*, which are published in the University Calendar: <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/Calendar/>
- 39 Schools should provide an opportunity for students and placement providers to evaluate and provide both formal and informal feedback on the placement once it has ended. Formal feedback may be collected by means of an evaluation form, for example. These evaluations should be considered by the relevant Board(s) of

Studies, appropriate action taken and the process documented in the Board's Annual Report. Feedback from external examiners should also inform this section of the Annual Report;

- 40 As part of their annual evaluation of placements, Boards of Studies should also monitor success rates, reasons for non-completion and, where appropriate, job offers connected to placements;
- 41 Placement learning opportunities and the appropriateness of their aims and outcomes will be reviewed as part of the University's *Requirements for the periodic review of programmes*:

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/qualitysupport/periodicreviewprog.pdf>