

Placement Pathways Health and Safety Guidance

Part 1 of this guidance provides you with some background knowledge on workplace risk, ensuring you have a basic understanding of health & safety hazards and the issues surrounding confidentiality and data handling.

Part 2 explains the placement risk assessment process, preparing you for the completion of your own placement risk assessment.

Once you have read and understood both parts of the guidance, you will be ready to take the Health & Safety Quiz.

Contents

Part 1 Background Knowledge – Understanding Risk	2
1.0 Health & Safety - Rules & Responsibilities	2
What are the laws on Health & Safety in the UK?.....	2
Are there sector-specific laws?	2
1.1 Your Health & Safety Responsibilities	2
Who is responsible for my health, safety and welfare while on placement?	2
1.2 Hazards	3
1.2.1 Everyday Hazards.....	3
1.2.2 Sector-Specific Hazards	4
1.3 Risk.....	4
1.4 Confidentiality and Data Handling Risks.....	5
1.5 Controlling Risk.....	5
Part 2 - Your Placement Risk Assessment	6
2.0 Introduction to the Placement Risk Assessment.....	6
What information do I need to complete a placement risk assessment?.....	6
What factors influence my placement’s risk assessment?.....	7
2.1 Assigning a Risk Profile	7
2.2 Work Factors	8
What type of work is hazardous?.....	8
2.3 Travel and Transport Factors.....	9
2.4 Location/Regional Factors	10
Do I need to register any overseas travel associated with my placement?.....	10
What are the overseas risks?.....	10
2.5 General / Environmental Health Factors.....	11
2.6 Individual Student Factors.....	11

Part 1 Background Knowledge – Understanding Risk

1.0 Health & Safety - Rules & Responsibilities

What are the laws on Health & Safety in the UK?

In the United Kingdom there are several pieces of legislation related to Health & Safety issues. The main piece of legislation is the **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**. This landmark piece of legislation was founded on the principle that those who create risk are best placed to control that risk, whether employers, employees or manufacturers of articles or substances for use at work.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act it is an employer's duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees and other people who might be affected by their business. Employers must do whatever is reasonably practicable to achieve this.

This means making sure that workers and others are protected from anything that may cause harm, effectively controlling any risks to injury or health that could arise in the workplace.

In the United Kingdom, the law says that every business must have a policy for managing health and safety. This policy sets out the general approach to health and safety and explains how the employer will manage health and safety.

If a UK employer has five or more employees, the policy must be written down.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is a UK government agency responsible for the encouragement, regulation and enforcement of workplace health, safety and welfare, and for research into occupational risks.

This includes publication of guidance aimed at employers. See the example manual handling link below, which illustrates how to perform a basic lift safely. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/manual-handling/good-handling-technique.htm>

Are there sector-specific laws?

Certain work activities have inherent risks and specific legislation is required to protect people undertaking or impacted by the activities.

In the United Kingdom various regulations exist which impact activities common in certain sectors. These sectors include:

- Health and Social Care Services
- Offshore oil and gas
- Quarries
- Agriculture
- Catering and hospitality
- Entertainment and leisure
- Education

1.1 Your Health & Safety Responsibilities

Who is responsible for my health, safety and welfare while on placement?

Everyone involved in a placement has a duty to reduce the chance of harm to the student and of the student causing harm to others. Ensuring your health, safety and welfare is not compromised is the responsibility of three parties:

- You – the student
- Your Placement Provider
- The University of Reading

What are my responsibilities while on placement?

You, as a student, owe a duty of care to:

- The University of Reading
- The Placement Provider
- Anyone who could be affected by your actions, including colleagues or members of the public

This begins by cooperating with the placement provider and the University in any matters related to Health & safety and thinking carefully about the hazards you may be confronted with.

1.2 Hazards

A hazard is anything that may cause harm, including:

- hazards to physical health such as chemicals, electricity, working from ladders, an open drawer, using machinery, working on a building site or farm, using tools etc.
- hazards to mental health such as unreasonable demands/control or not providing appropriate support and management

1.2.1 Everyday Hazards

All workplaces have hazards. Some of the everyday hazards that you might encounter on your placement, regardless of the sector, include:

Electrical hazards

Electricity can kill or severely injure people and cause damage to property. Those working directly with power supplies face the most hazards, but even simple office equipment such as kettles and microwaves, can present a hazard, particularly when malfunctioning.

Fire hazards

Most fires are preventable, and those responsible for workplaces and other buildings to which the public have access can avoid them by taking responsibility for and adopting the right behaviours and procedures.

Gas hazards

There is a danger of fire, explosion, gas leaks and carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning from gas appliances and the gas supply itself if they are not properly installed and maintained.

Hazards causing slips, trips and falls

Most slips occur when floors become wet or contaminated and many trips are due to poor housekeeping. Injuries sustained can range from the mild to the fatal and in most workplaces the solutions are fairly simple and cost-effective, providing employers have procedures in place to identify hazards in the workplace.

Manual handling hazards

Manual handling causes over a third of all workplace injuries. These include work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) such as pain and injuries to arms, legs and joints, and repetitive strain injuries of various sorts.

Harmful substance hazards

Many materials or substances used or created at work could harm your health. These substances could be dusts, gases or fumes that you breathe in, or liquids, gels or powders that come into contact with your eyes or skin. Even consumer cleaning products can become a hazard if not stored and handled in the right way.

1.2.2 Sector-Specific Hazards

In some sectors there are specific hazards you might encounter in addition to the everyday hazards, these include:

Hazards caused by machinery, plant and equipment

Moving machinery can cause injuries in many ways:

- People can be struck and injured by moving parts of machinery or ejected material. Parts of the body can also be drawn in or trapped between rollers, belts and pulley drives
- Sharp edges can cause cuts and severing injuries, sharp-pointed parts can cause stabbing or puncture the skin, and rough surface parts can cause friction or abrasion
- People can be crushed, both between parts moving together or towards a fixed part of the machine, wall or other object, and two parts moving past one another can cause shearing
- Parts of the machine, materials and emissions (such as steam or water) can be hot or cold enough to cause burns or scalds and electricity can cause electrical shock and burns
- Injuries can also occur due to machinery becoming unreliable and developing faults or when machines are used improperly through inexperience or lack of training

Hazards of working at height

Working at height remains one of the biggest causes of fatalities and major injuries. Common cases include falls from ladders, or through fragile surfaces. 'Work at height' means work in any place where, if there were no precautions in place, a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury (for example a fall through a fragile roof).

Radiation hazards

Radiation comes in a variety of forms and is used in a diverse range of industrial, medical, research and communications applications. Some of these applications cause harmful exposure risks that must be effectively controlled.

Vibration hazards

Hand-arm vibration (HAV) is vibration transmitted during work into hands and arms. It can be caused by operating handheld power tools, such as road breakers, and hand guided equipment, such as powered lawnmowers, or by holding materials being processed by machines, such as pedestal grinders. Occasional exposure is unlikely to cause ill health.

Pressure equipment hazards

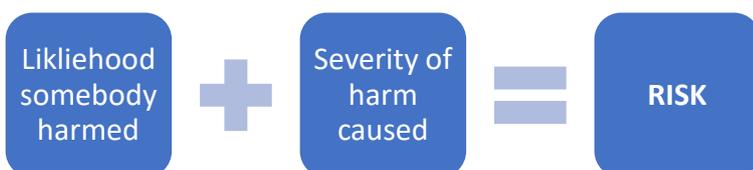
Many types of pressure equipment can be potentially hazardous. Examples include steam boilers and associated pipework, pressurised hot-water boilers, air compressors, air receivers and associated pipework, autoclaves, gas (e.g. LPG) storage tanks and chemical reaction vessels.

Noise hazards

Loud noise at work can damage your hearing. This usually happens gradually, and it may only be when the damage caused by noise combines with hearing loss due to ageing that people realise how impaired their hearing has become.

1.3 Risk

Risk is the chance, high or low, that somebody could be harmed by a hazard, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be.



Your employer or placement provider should be aware of the risks associated with the work you will undertake and should be taking appropriate steps to control these risks. The completed 'Health & Safety Checklist' provides an insight into the employer's or placement provider's approach to health and safety.

1.4 Confidentiality and Data Handling Risks

As a University of Reading student, you should adhere to your employer's or placement provider's policy and procedures concerning the disclosure of confidential or sensitive information. There may be confidentiality clauses in your contract with the employer, or you may be informed verbally what information can and cannot be shared externally. Any such restrictions could apply to the disclosure of information in your placement assessments.

For unpaid placements, the University of Reading placement agreement has been designed to ensure that you and your placement provider are aware of your responsibilities in relation to confidentiality and data handling.

It is imperative that you familiarise yourself with your employer's regulations on confidentiality before you begin your placement. During and after your placement, you should adhere to the following principles:

- Do not post details relating to your placement, employer/placement provider, or placement colleagues and clients on social media platforms without the approval of your employer/placement provider
- Never publicly disclose information which is deemed to be sensitive. For example, you should never share potentially sensitive information with your friends and family
- Adhere to your employer's/placement provider's policies concerning the disclosure of private or commercially sensitive information
- Ensure you familiarise yourself with your placement provider's policy surrounding the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and data handling. This is especially important if you have access to personal data during your placement. For example, the contact details of a customer/client/patient
- Always maintain professional channels of communication with customers or clients associated with your placement and follow your employer's/placement provider's policies and guidance on appropriate communication

Both during your placement and once it has ended, if you choose to ignore your employer's/placement provider's policies, or cause a breach of confidentiality, you risk:

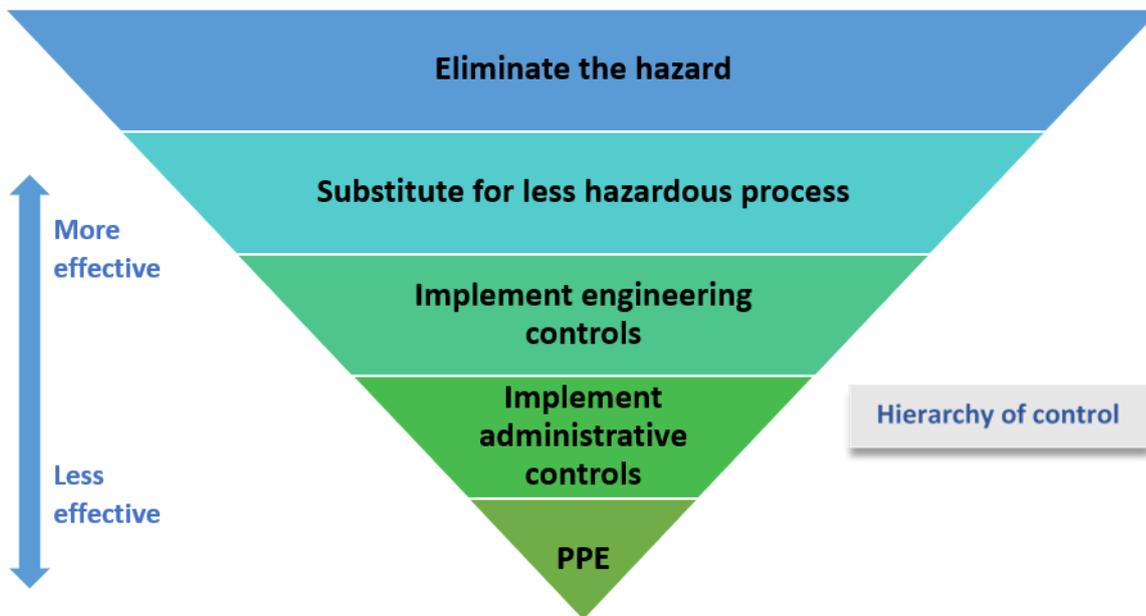
- Your placement being terminated, and/or,
- Being subject to a formal student misconduct investigation

1.5 Controlling Risk

Employers/placement providers can remove or reduce risks by improving the workplace and equipment, and by training workers to avoid or contain hazards by following safe procedures.

Your placement provider should already have identified the hazards presenting a serious risk and taken steps to reduce or remove them.

The following diagram outlines methods that can be used to reduce the likelihood of accidents or ill health as a result of a hazard. The methods run from most effective (eliminating the hazard), down to least effective (issuing personal protective equipment – PPE).



Ideally a hazard should be completely eliminated as this is the only effective way of moving a risk entirely. In reality, many hazards cannot be eliminated, but your employer/placement provider should be taking steps to reduce the chance of incidents and the potential harm they might cause.

This might be by doing things in a different and safer way, a *substitute process* or by placing a barrier between the worker and the hazard (*engineering controls*).

The employer/placement provider may have implemented *administrative controls* to try and control the risk. These typically aim to change the behaviour of people, rather than removing the actual hazard, which makes them less effective.

The least effective, but sometimes only method of reducing risk is to provide the worker with *personal protective equipment* (PPE). This relies on the effectiveness of the PPE and the correct use of PPE by the worker.

Part 2 - Your Placement Risk Assessment

2.0 Introduction to the Placement Risk Assessment

Every student undertaking a placement as part of their degree programme requires a risk assessment. This ensures that the placement environment is safe and risks are minimised, allowing you to focus on learning as part of your personal and professional development.

Although your risk assessment initially forms part of the approval process for your placement, it plays an important role beyond this. Your Placement Coordinator may need to update the risk assessment during your placement to reflect any changes. For example, if midway through your placement you inform the University that you have been asked you to travel abroad by your employer.

What information do I need to complete a placement risk assessment?

To complete the risk assessment, you will need information concerning

- the work activities - gained through the application process, or through your own research into the role and company. Some of this should already have been captured in the 'About your placement' section of the pathway
- the employer's/placement provider's approach to health and safety issues - gained through the completion of the Health & Safety Checklist.

What factors influence my placement's risk assessment?

The placement risk assessment considers factors under the following categories:

Work factors

These relate to the kind of work you will be undertaking including the 'sector' you will be working in. They consider the tasks you will be undertaking on a regular basis and the client group, customers, stakeholders and/or audience you will be working with.

Travel and transport factors

These factors relate to how you travel to and from your placement including flights and other modes of transport. For example, you might be flying to your placement location, and then travel to work by bus or by car on a daily basis.

Location/regional factors

This relates to location(s) where you will carry out your placement. Will you be overseas or in the UK? Will you be located on or offsite? For example, you could be based in an office, but expected to travel to different sites each day.

General/environmental health factors

This relates to the environment you are working within on a regular basis, for example, you may be working outside throughout the cold winter weather, be exposed to chemicals, working around loud machinery or working with animals.

Individual student factors

This relates to you, your health and any conditions that may need to be considered to help ensure that you are fully supported during your placement, including any reasonable adjustments to help you thrive on your placement.

2.1 Assigning a Risk Profile

You will be asked to assign a low, medium or high-risk profile for each category and provide an explanation for your decision.

Work Factors - select a risk profile*

Select One ▼

Select One

Low

Medium

High

Provide an explanation for your selected risk profile:*

provide your explanation here.....|

It is important that you are honest and accurate when completing your risk assessment. Your answers will be reviewed by your Placement Coordinator to ensure that they are consistent with the information previously provided about your placement as well as the completed Health & Safety Checklist.

If your risk assessment appears to contradict your placement offer, your Placement Coordinator will need to query this with you, which can slow down the approval process unnecessarily.

Where factors are deemed 'High risk', your employer/placement provider may need to provide additional assurances that it can protect your health and safety to a reasonable standard. Most employers/placement providers are cooperative and already have robust procedures in place for protecting their workforce.

In rare cases where the employer/placement provider does not offer adequate support and assurances, the University may not be able to approve the placement, requiring you to consider alternative options.

2.2 Work Factors

Different industries have different risks and you should avoid making assumptions about the industry, employer/placement provider or work location without researching first.

Key things to consider:

- Will you be working with children or vulnerable adults?
- Will you need to work on your own?
- Will you performing, or in close proximity to hazards that have potential to cause serious injury or fatalities?

Examples of low, medium and high-risk profiles

	Low	Medium	High
Type of work	You are working in an office environment.	You are working in proximity to potentially hazardous activities. For example, occasional visits to a construction site to conduct observational activities. You are working with children or vulnerable adults, where safeguarding needs to take place.	You are undertaking community work with high-risk groups. You are working in a hospital where you may be exposed to viruses / disease. You are working on the construction site where a multi-storey building is being built.

What type of work is hazardous?

Hazards exist in lots of sectors and it is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of hazards or define all hazardous types of work. You must consider the activities you will undertake within your own placement carefully and if you are unsure if something should be considered hazardous, speak to your Placement Coordinator.

Examples of hazardous work include:

- Construction site with work at height or below ground, exposure to dusts, moving machinery, electrical systems.

- Operation of machinery with mechanical hazards such as high-speed rotating parts, crushing or entanglement risks.
- Laboratory work with toxic/hazardous materials.
- Community work with known high-risk groups of clients or locations (addicts, violent or vulnerable people).
- Work with animal bedding and/or large or dangerous animals.
- Activities requiring specific licences or qualification (for example diving, flying aircraft, crewing an aerial device).
- Work involving significant hazards in small companies that do not have professional health and safety advice.

2.3 Travel and Transport Factors

You should consider risks associated with:

- Your daily travel to work
- Your travel to the region/country to undertake the placement
- Any travel instructed by the placement provider.

You should ask yourself questions such as:

- How long are the journeys?
- What is the method of transport used?
- Do I need to be alert during the journey?
- How familiar am I with the route?

Examples of low, medium and high-risk profiles

	Low	Medium	High
Travel factors	<p>You have a comfortable commute</p> <p>Your placement doesn't involve any work-related driving</p>	<p>You have a long daily commute</p> <p>You will be expected to drive vehicles for work purposes</p>	<p>You must undertake significant travel to reach your placement, on local transport facilities known to be high risk (countries/regions with poor driving or vehicle safety standards).</p> <p>You must undertake demanding travel during placement. E.g. driving hundreds of miles to reach customers/sites.</p> <p>You are required to drive others as part of your placement,</p>

2.4 Location/Regional Factors

Includes overseas placements & overseas travel during placement

Do I need to register any overseas travel associated with my placement?

You may need to travel overseas for all or part of your placement. When you travel overseas you are generally covered by the University's emergency medical and travel insurance, but you will need to register your travel details on RISIS (please speak to your Placement Coordinator about this).

Even if your placement is primarily based in the UK but requires you to travel to an overseas location for just a day, you must inform the University of the dates and location as soon as you are aware of your trip.

You will be issued with a Care Card which will have information relating to University travel and insurance providers, as well as key points of contact within the University who can assist you while you are away on placement.

Please note: Overseas placements need to be approved by the Head of your Academic School and if the placement is in a country which is deemed a travel risk by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, it will also need to be approved by the Vice Chancellor's office.

What are the overseas risks?

Many countries do not apply the same laws as the UK, have different expectations of how people should behave, or adhere to less rigorous health and safety standards. You will need to ensure you understand the risks you might face, which could include:

Observing cultural, political and religious values

In certain countries this might involve avoiding alcohol, limiting your use of social media, dressing respectfully or refraining from discussing political matters publicly. You should research your placement country/region in advance and in cases where your placement is considered high risk. You may be asked to read a communications plan drawn up by your Academic School.

Ensuring you have the correct immunisations and medications

Some countries will carry high health risks, such as exposure to malaria, yellow fever and similar. You are responsible for arranging the correct immunisations in advance of your trip as advised by your GP, as well as ensuring that you have a sufficient supply of any regular medication you need. Please also be aware of the restrictions placed on certain medications in your placement country.

Transport networks

Transport networks may make daily travel less safe than it is in the UK or other countries you are familiar with. Speak to your placement provider and if there are risks you may need to consider avoiding unnecessary travel. Is your placement in a location that can be reached using **advised public routes and transport** where you are always visible and contactable?

Example low medium and high-risk profiles:

	Low	Medium	High
Location factors	Your placement is based in the UK with no significant local risks	Your placement is based overseas in a low-risk area There are possible communication delays due to the region where you will be working	You are lone working in a remote or risky working environment Your placement is based in a country with a risk of civil disorder or with poor communication networks

2.5 General / Environmental Health Factors

You'll need to consider the environment you'll be working in and any risks it may present to your health & Safety. Does the region you're travelling to present a risk of disease you'll need to be immunised for? Are you exposed to the elements during your work activities?

Example low medium and high-risk profiles:

	Low	Medium	High
General/ environmental health factors	Your placement is working for a UK company inside their Head Office	Your placement is based in an environment where you may benefit from optional inoculations or vaccinations	<p>You are working in an area where health risks require mandatory health protection measures, for example vaccinations</p> <p>You are working in very hot or strenuous working conditions (for example manual working outdoors in the sun)</p> <p>You are working in cold conditions (for example a catering placement in a food cold storage/ cook chill or freeze facility)</p>

2.6 Individual Student Factors

Your knowledge, skills, experience, attitude and personality can affect the risks you face while on your placement, as can any health conditions or disabilities.

Perhaps you require some form of adjustment to help you perform your duties effectively or lessen the effects of a health condition. This could be assistive software for dyslexia, an ergonomic chair, or a specific work schedule, see next page for more information on reasonable adjustments.

Employers/ placement providers may be able to make reasonable adjustments for you, but this should never be assumed, particularly if you have not explained your requirements to them.

Personal factors could also relate to your familiarity with the environment or the equipment used. For example, a placement student who has grown up on a family farm may be more comfortable in an agricultural environment than someone new to this type of environment. While this would not remove the work-related risks, it may mitigate them slightly, so it is worth mentioning here.

If an employer/ placement provider expects you to undertake work that you are not trained to do, even if the local rules and regulations allow this, you should record it here. For example, in the UK you are legally permitted to drive a minibus using your current car driving licence so long as you meet certain criteria, but if you are an inexperienced driver this would still present a significant risk.

Example low medium and high-risk profiles

	Low	Medium	High
Individual student factors	<p>You don't have any disabilities which require support/adjustments</p> <p>You have the knowledge, skills and authorisations to carry out the proposed work</p>	<p>You are pregnant, or you have a health condition or disability that requires some reasonable adjustments</p> <p>You have limited language skills for the region you are travelling to</p>	<p>You have a health condition which could worsen as a result of the placement activities.</p> <p>You will be expected to undertake work which you are not authorised or qualified to do.</p>

What is a reasonable adjustment?

In the UK employers must make reasonable adjustments to ensure workers with disabilities, or physical or mental health conditions, aren't substantially disadvantaged when doing their jobs.

Many other countries have similar rules but may use different terminology. Regardless of the local equality laws, a responsible placement provider should understand the importance of reducing or preventing the obstacles faced by its workforce, including placement students.

Examples of reasonable adjustments include:

- doing things another way, such as allowing a placement student with social anxiety disorder to have their own desk instead of hot-desking
- making physical changes to the workplace, like installing a ramp for a placement student who is a wheelchair user or an audio-visual fire alarm for a student who is deaf
- letting a disabled placement student work somewhere else, such as on the ground floor to avoid access obstacles
- changing the equipment used, for instance providing a special keyboard if a placement student has arthritis

What is considered reasonable?

Placement providers are not obliged to make all the changes you ask for. There are various factors that they should consider, ideally with the input of the placement student and/or an occupational health professional

- How effective will an adjustment be?
- Will it mean that the placement student is slightly less of a disadvantage or will it significantly reduce the disadvantage?
- Is it practical?
- Will it cause much disruption?
- Will it help other people in the workplace?
- Is the cost prohibitive?

Students may feel uncomfortable disclosing disabilities or health conditions to employers/ placement providers or worry about being discriminated against as a result of doing so. For further guidance about disclosing, please contact your Placement Coordinator to discuss in confidence or seek advice from the University's Disability Advisory Service.