

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER  
GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE  
FOR ALL COURSES INCORPORATING AN ELEMENT OF  
WORK EXPERIENCE

2001 (revised September 2007)

The aim of this Guide to Good Practice is to enable Faculties to support the management and operation of work experience throughout the University. To reflect the wide variety of courses and differences within courses and Schools, it is envisaged that each School, subject or course will produce their own placement document incorporating the principles of this guide, as most appropriate. Further information may be obtained from the Career Development Centre or Placement Tutors within each Faculty.

The intention is to provide clear guidelines on responsibilities and encourage a collaborative approach to inclusive learning

In response to equality legislation, the request by the Teaching and Learning Committee and consideration by the Work-Based Learning Committee, the Equality Unit was asked to update the Guide to Good Practice for all courses incorporating an element of Work Experience (2001).

Inclusions aim to reduce vulnerability to litigation and outline staff responsibilities according to equality and data protection legislation. The advice given mirrors that given to students in the bullying and harassment guidelines and the equality training for students provided by the Equality Unit.

This September 2007 version is presented as an interim document pending review during the 2007/08 academic year resulting from:

- Publication of QAA Code of Practice - Section 9: Work-based and placement learning.
- Reference to Association of Sandwich Education and Training (ASET) Good Practice for Placements Guide - 'Managing Placements with IT and Online' and the ASET response to QAA.
- Publication of Health and Safety for Managing Placement by Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA)
- Training provided by ASET and Universities Safety and Health Association (USHA)

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## **Guide to Good Practice**

### **Introduction**

Co-operative education, internship, sandwich courses, industrial placement, clinical/professional practice, and supervised work experience are different terms for describing a method used by a wide variety of educational establishments to apply theory in practice, the academic environment in the world of work. In these courses, periods of study at the university incorporate periods of relevant supervised work experience. This approach to degree, diploma and postgraduate courses has been a hallmark of the University of Ulster.

There are significant variations in the supervised work experience (placement) schemes currently operated throughout the University. The two main classifications are paid and unpaid placements.

- Among paid placements there are placements which last a full year and others which last, in general, six months.
- Among unpaid there are variations ranging from concurrent to block, a few days to a semester, both clinical and associated professional placements.

On many courses, placement is a compulsory, assessed element of the course while on others the placement may be an optional component.

Placements may be undertaken locally or abroad, depending on the course objectives and exchange arrangements in the receiving country.

Existing assessment models and accreditation also reflect a variation depending on the guidelines of a professional body or competencies requirements. Currently, students may be awarded the Diploma/Certificate in Industrial Studies, Diploma/Certificate in Professional Practice, National Vocational Qualifications or professional accreditation through supervised observation/practice.

It is not the intention here to prescribe a preferred model for placements nor to list in detail the many academic and supporting functions which need to be undertaken to successfully monitor all forms of supervised work experience. It is the intention to provide a set of principles based on existing good practice, which may be of benefit to those involved in the courses involving a period of work experience or in the modification of courses to include work experience.

## **1. The main objectives of placement/ work experience programmes are:**

- to enhance students' familiarity with the world of work and enable them to reflect constructively on issues related to work
- to assist students to evaluate and understand how work experience relates to their personal/career and future professional development
- to develop employability skills, intellectual skills, core or key skills, personal attributes, knowledge about how organisations work
- to consolidate, complement and extend the academic programme and enable the essential integration of clinical/professional practice
- to maintain and develop links between the University, the placement provider and the community.
- to develop clinical/professional skills and to strengthen the application of theory to practice

## **2. Operation of the programmes**

In accordance with this Guide, the appropriate body within each Faculty, should draw up a clear statement in the form of a subject or course placement booklet that could be provided to employers in advance of placement negotiations and to students on entering the course and starting their first placement. It is recognised that the work placement is a tripartite arrangement that places responsibilities on the University, on the student and on the placement provider.

### **2.1 Industrial placement**

#### **2.1.1 Operational Roles**

(a) The Placement Tutor, as the Module Coordinator for the placements of a particular course, is the primary contact between the employer and the placement student.

(b) The Industrial Supervisor is nominated by the organisation taking the student for industrial placement to monitor the student's progress and to formulate a provisional programme of work/learning contract. During the placement year the student is considered to be an employee of the placement agency. As such the student will be subject to the terms and conditions of employment and equality policies that apply within the organisation and will be subject also to any form of performance appraisal undertaken by the organisation. The University requires an industrial supervisor to be nominated by the organisation to supervise the work of the student during the year. It is important that this person is nominated at an early stage so that discussions can take place with the visiting academic tutor.

(c) The Visiting Academic Tutor is responsible for arranging and making visits to students in industrial placements as agreed with the placement tutors within the required time schedules and for ensuring that the aims and objectives of the placement are met.

### 2.1.2 Responsibilities

(a) The **Placement Tutor** is responsible for

- co-ordinating and managing the industrial placements
- liaising with Disability Services and Health and Safety Services to ensure that disabled students are provided with appropriate placements which have been assessed in terms of risk (i.e. with regard to Health and Safety) and are commensurate with the individual student's abilities
- ensuring reasonable adjustments are provided to disabled placement students in accordance with SENDO (either prior to or during placement)
- overseeing students' progress
- liaising with employers and in particular to make the nominated Industrial Supervisor aware of aims of placement and assessment criteria at the start of the placement
- arranging Visiting Academic Tutors from academic staff to carry out the placement visits as appropriate
- complying with health and safety arrangements for placements consistent with the requirements of the University's Health and Safety Policy
- complying with the University's equality and Bullying and Harassment policies
- making an initial response to complaints of unlawful discrimination or bullying/harassment and referring them to the Head of school
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to a placement student's disability status, as required by The Data Protection Act 1998
- arranging the interview panels on completion of placement
- collating the final total placement module marks for the DIS/CIS or Diploma/Certificate in Professional Practice and presenting the results at the Board of Examiners meeting on completion of the placement
- all other duties associated with the role of module co-ordinator

(b) The Industrial Supervisor will:

- ensure any advertisements or applications for placement are non-discriminatory and comply with Northern Ireland equality legislation
- ensure its premises are accessible to disabled students
- if required, ensure reasonable adjustments are provided to disabled students, in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act
- maintain confidentiality in relation to a placement student's disability status, as required by The Data Protection Act 1998
- be directly responsible for the student while on placement
- prepare a work programme in consultation with the student and the placement and/or visiting academic tutor
- arrange a programme of induction for the student to the workplace and continue to provide sufficient instruction to maximise effectiveness during placement
- familiarise the student with the organisation's Health and Safety and equality policies at induction
- arrange regular meetings with the student to discuss progress

- monitor progress of the student, and complete assessment forms when appropriate
- respond effectively to any complaint of unlawful discrimination or bullying/harassment
- notify the placement tutor of any problems, where necessary
- meet with the visiting academic tutor to discuss student progress

(c) The Visiting Academic Tutor should

- be familiar with the course regulations and the assessment requirements for students visited
- visit each allocated student and discuss progress, provide course information, check log books/diaries and complete assessment forms
- respond to any complaints of unlawful discrimination/bullying/harassment and refer them to the Head of School
- meet the industrial supervisor and discuss the student's progress, assessment, technical reports or projects
- report any relevant matters relating to health and safety, the provision of reasonable adjustments, equality and/or bullying/ harassment
- maintain confidentiality in relation to a placement student's disability status, as required by The Data Protection Act 1998
- monitor quality of placement to ensure learning opportunities are appropriate
- complete a written report on the visit (this will include the assessment) and return it to the placement tutor
- endeavour to foster further links between the organisation and the University with a view to developing strategic alliances in the form of research collaboration, student sponsorship, input to curriculum content and design

(d) The Placement Student is responsible for:

- attending equality awareness training prior to placement
- informing disability services if they are disabled so that appropriate adjustments can be discussed in confidence
- contacting Disability Services and notifying them of any changes in their circumstances
- finding his/her own placement given the assistance, resources and information provided by the Placement Tutor, academic staff and the Career Development Centre
- completing the health and safety checklist as directed by the University's Health and Safety Policy and return it to the University as directed
- providing log books and reports for inspection by the Visiting Academic Tutor during visits
- ensuring that all assessments are handed in by the date set by the Placement Tutor
- complying with the employer's terms and conditions of employment and Equality and Bullying and Harassment Policies

- personal conduct which upholds and enhances the good standing and reputation of the University of Ulster and discourages discrimination/ bullying/harassment
- finding out how to invoke complaint procedures if necessary
- co-operating with any investigation of discrimination/bullying/harassment
- contacting the University if a problem arises

## **2.2 Clinical placements**

### **2.2.1 Operational Roles**

- (a) The Placement Tutor of a particular course is the primary contact between the placement provider and the student
- (b) The Clinical Supervisor is nominated by the organisation taking the student for the clinical placement to organise the day to day management of the clinical placement
- (c) The Visiting Academic Tutor is responsible for arranging and making visits to students in clinical placements as agreed with placement tutors within the required time schedules and for ensuring that the aims and objectives of the placement are met

### **2.2.2 Responsibilities**

The Placement Tutor as the Module Coordinator for the placements of a particular course is responsible for:

- coordinating and managing the clinical placements
- liaising with Disability Services and Health and Safety Services to ensure that disabled students are provided with appropriate placements which have been assessed in terms of risk (i.e. with regard to Health and Safety) and are commensurate with the individual student's abilities
- ensuring reasonable adjustments are provided to disabled placement students in accordance with SENDO (either prior to, or during placement)
- overseeing students' progress
- liaising with clinical supervisors/managers
- collating assessment marks when necessary
- arranging debriefing sessions on completion of placement
- visiting each student in the clinical centre or arranging for other academic staff to carry out the placement visits as appropriate
- complying with health and safety arrangements for placements as established by the University's Health and Safety Policy
- complying with the University's equality and Bullying and Harassment policies
- making an initial response to complaints of unlawful discrimination or bullying/harassment and referring them to the Head of school
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to a placement student's disability status, as required by The Data Protection Act 1998

(b) The Clinical Supervisor should:

- ensure any advertisements or applications for placement are non-discriminatory and comply with NI equality legislation
- ensure its premises are accessible to disabled students
- if required, ensure reasonable adjustments are provided to disabled students, in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act
- maintain confidentiality in relation to a placement student's disability status, as required by The Data Protection Act 1998
- be directly responsible for the student while on placement
- schedule and monitor the student's training programme
- familiarise the student with the organisation's Health and Safety and equality policies at induction
- ensure that each student obtains the required clinical experience for each particular placement
- organise tutorials, demonstrations and seminars as necessary
- arrange completion of all required assessment elements
- complete the student's evaluation for the placement and return the evaluation, along with all assessment marks, to the Placement Tutor as per required timetable
- liaise between the organisation and the Placement Tutor

(c) The Visiting Academic Tutor should:

- be familiar with the course regulations and assessment requirements for the students visited
- visit each allocated student and discuss progress, provide course information, check log books/diaries and complete assessment forms
- meet the clinical supervisor and discuss the student's progress, assessment, technical reports or projects
- respond to any complaints of unlawful discrimination/bullying/harassment and refer them to the Head of School
- maintain confidentiality in relation to a placement student's disability status, as required by The Data Protection Act 1998
- report back and return all completed assessment and progress reports to the Placement Tutor
- be satisfied that appropriate Health and Safety procedures are in place consistent with the requirements of the University's Health and Safety Policy
- be satisfied that appropriate equality and bullying and harassment policies are in place consistent with the requirements of the University's equality policies
- monitor quality of placement to ensure learning opportunities are appropriate
- endeavour to foster further links between the organisation and the University with a view to developing strategic alliances in the form of research collaboration, input to curriculum content and design



(d) The Placement Student is responsible for:

- attending equality awareness training prior to placement
- informing disability services if they are disabled so that appropriate adjustments can be discussed in confidence
- contacting Disability Services and notifying them of any changes in their circumstances
- ensuring that appropriate insurance or indemnity is in place
- completing the health and safety checklist as directed by the University's Health and Safety Policy and return it to the University as directed
- ensuring that all assessments are handed in by the date set by the Clinical Supervisor
- reading and signing the Code of Professional Conduct and Rules for Students in Clinical Placement
- complying with employer's terms and conditions of employment and equality and bullying and Harassment Policies
- personal conduct which upholds and enhances the good standing and reputation of the University of Ulster and discourages discrimination/ bullying/harassment
- finding out how to invoke complaint procedures if necessary
- co-operating with any investigation of discrimination/bullying/harassment
- contacting the University if a problem arises

### **2.3 Faculty Responsibility**

Successful operation of any programme will require

- recognition of the tripartite agreement and the acceptance of responsibilities by all parties; student, placement provider and the University
- input from all relevant members of academic staff
- allocation of adequate administrative and clerical support
- the nomination of members of staff as placement tutors to have specific responsibility for the various aspects of the placement scheme and to co-ordinate input from other staff
- utilization of expertise from other departments concerned with student learning and development namely Guidance and Counselling and the Career Development Centre. Both prior to and during the placement programme, a partnership approach would ensure the development of consistent and deliverable policies and procedures which is designed to enhance the quality of the programmes and ensure aims and objectives were achieved
- input, where possible, from professional bodies
- compliance with the University's equality and Bullying and Harassment policies and equality legislation.

The above activities incorporate a range of logistical and administrative aspects which will vary in extent from course to course depending on matters such as the nature of the placement, the numbers of students being placed

annually, duration of the placement, health and safety, liability, monitoring and assessment requirements.

Successfully co-ordinating these topics will require that Faculties should have in place support systems which will provide a quick and effective response to the needs of employers, students on placement, students being presented for placement, Faculty and University bodies, exchanging institutions, and external government agencies such as the Training and Employment Agency, the Industrial Development Board and the Department of Trade and Industry.

The Faculty should have in place clear arrangements to support placement activities, and provide adequate resources for their successful operation.

Staff supervising placements might need to remind students and employers that the usual supports are still available for them to use on a confidential basis should they encounter difficulties while away from the University. Staff from Counselling and Guidance are always happy to discuss problems with students or placement supervisors. Services include advice on financial support while on placement, issues arising from disability, harassment and physical and mental health.

Detailed guidelines relating to preparation of students for placement, monitoring while on placement and assessment should be contained in the course document. The following sections address the minimum that should be covered.

### **3. Preparation of students for placement**

If experience of the world of work is to be meaningful, students must be able to learn from it. The learning to be gained from a working environment can be extremely relevant to an individual's chosen career path. The development of reflective learning materials to improve the quality of learning from work experience should be a key feature of any programme of preparation prior to placement. The following areas should be addressed:

- assessment criteria including student conduct and professionalism of approach required for the placement in advance of the placement commencing
- components and criteria used in assessment as per course document
- range of work placements/experience opportunities
- development of career management and transferable skills including verbal and written communication skills, self awareness, self promotion, action planning, team working, assertiveness, negotiation and decision making and exploring opportunities
- professional issues and employment etiquette
- expanding student awareness and understanding of the value of work experience and work related learning and how their objectives may be achieved
- awareness of what skills, qualities and abilities employers seek in potential employees and how these are measured
- knowledge about employer use of aptitude/psychometric tests
- the opportunity to meet and interact with

- employers visiting the University
- post placement students
- health and safety arrangements
- equality legislation and rights/responsibilities
- compliant procedures and advice and support available
- issues of personal safety and cultural awareness particularly in overseas placements

In the case of clinical placements students must be made aware of the following

- Code of Professional Conduct
- patient confidentiality
- rules for students in clinical placement
- health and safety requirements
- equality legislation

The students should also be advised of any sources of information/help available to them from the Career Development Centre, the Equality Unit, Guidance and Counselling and if a pre-placement module is in operation.

#### **4. Placement monitoring**

It is essential that at Faculty/School level there is a policy in relation to visiting and monitoring students while on placement. It should be recognised that placement visits are an important mechanism for securing or retaining placement contacts. Quality assurance and compliance with the University's recommendations in relation to health and safety regulations and liability must underpin all policy statements.

It is of the utmost importance that students are made aware of their responsibilities prior to placement and that the mechanisms in place for monitoring are fully understood. The Placement Tutor should ensure that all students are aware of:

- the requirements for the placement module assessment
- the pattern of visits by the placement and/or visiting academic tutors
- their obligations to their employer
- the requirement to complete the checklist in the University's booklet "Health and Safety - Guidance Notes for Students on Placement"
- the requirement for insurance or indemnity
- their responsibilities under equality legislation

All students undertaking an element of work experience/placement as part of their course should receive visits as deemed appropriate by their placement tutor. The objective of visits is to monitor progress and assess performance. The number of visits will depend on the length of placement and be conducted in line with Faculty policy. It is essential that a professional service be provided to the student and the placement provider. In addition to monitoring of placements by visits on site, the visiting academic tutor should make

regular contact with students by telephone, E-mail, fax, post or return days to University.

Policy statements devised by each School/Faculty must provide guidelines to ensure:

- all students receive equality awareness training prior to placement
- confirmation that placement providers have appropriate equality and bullying and harassment policies in place, consistent with NI equality legislation
- confirmation that placement providers have effective complaints procedures
- all students are visited as appropriate within required time schedules
- procedure to be undertaken if a student is asked to leave a placement
- procedure to be undertaken if problems arise e.g. harassment, conflict, role etc.
- confirmation that placement providers have appropriate Health and Safety procedures in place consistent with the requirements of the University's Health and Safety Policy
- All visiting academic staff involved in visiting students are afforded time to conduct visits and are aware of the role of the visiting academic tutor

## **5. Assessment of placement**

Each course should have a clear statement on how the placement is to be assessed and accredited. It should meet the learning objectives of the placement experience and comply with the relevant professional accreditation.

- assessment should ensure parity of marking procedure and treat all students equally regardless of the perceived quality of the placement
- assessment of placement should reflect quality of learning and should be based on evidence supplied by the three principal participants - student, visiting academic staff, clinical/industrial supervisor
- all parties involved should be aware of their responsibilities in the assessment process
- the assessment mechanisms should encourage students to reflect upon their own learning and performance by use of
  - log books
  - diaries
  - meetings with industrial/clinical supervisor and the visiting/academic tutor.

## **6. Visits to placements outside the U.K/Ireland**

It is strongly recommended that a representative of the University visit students in this category at least once. If this is not possible, the Course Committee should nominate a person of appropriate standing in the country of placement to act on its behalf in visiting the student in accordance with the practice for placements in the UK.

## **7. Reflection on completion of placement**

The practice of a student reflecting on their placement experience often through giving a presentation, interview with Head of School or tutorial with placement tutor is common in a number of Schools. This practice which incorporates elements of debriefing has obvious advantages for the student and assists with the planning and development of future placement opportunities. Contact with the placement provider could also be involved in the debriefing. It is considered good practice to take this idea a step further and design an induction programme, which the debriefing could be part of, for returning students to aid the transition from the world of work back to full-time education.