



Placement Learning Policy

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Placement Learning Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. All higher education providers are expected to have procedures in place for the “management of all learning opportunities leading or contributing to the award of academic credit or a qualification that are delivered, assessed or supported through an arrangement with one or more organisations other than the degree-awarding body”. ([UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others](#))
- 1.2. This Placement Learning Policy is informed by, and is consistent with, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B10 expectation that the University takes “ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them”.

2. Preliminary Considerations

2.1. Purpose, scope and structure of this policy

Four broad but distinct types of placement learning undertaken as part of programmes of study offered by the University may be identified:

1. Short placements: placement learning embedded into and assessed through a module / assessment block which forms part of the normal programme for the degree (such placement learning may be an optional or a compulsory element of a programme);
2. Professional placements: placement learning integrated into and assessed through a module / assessment block which forms part of the programme for a degree and is specifically associated with the assessment of professional competency within a statutory or regulated profession (e.g. placements in Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Nursing, Education with QTS);
3. Sandwich placements: placement learning associated with an additional year of placement study over and above the normal programme for an undergraduate degree, which is assessed by its own assessment task or set of assessments and recognised by its own degree title. The structure of these programmes (traditionally referred to as ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ sandwich programmes) is defined in Senate Regulation 2.
Postgraduate Taught placements: placement learning associated with a period of placement study which is over and above the normal duration of a postgraduate degree, assessed by its own assessment task(s), and recognised by its own degree title.

The policy expands upon (but does not duplicate) the relevant parts of Senate Regulation 2 (SR2.43-44) which should also be consulted. . The assessment

associated with placement learning will be contained in one or more assessment/modular blocks and explained in the associated block outline document(s) and other relevant programme documentation.

The University has defined policies concerning the Health and Safety of students undertaking placements and work placement equality, both of which should be consulted alongside this policy.¹

The Placement Learning Policy also takes account of relevant parts of the QAA's [UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others \(2012\)](#).

The range of placement learning offered by the University is considerable. The core principles established by this policy will need to be implemented through local policies, procedures and guidelines by the College/Department/Division (as appropriate) and the Professional Development Centre.

In addition to statements of policy, guidance on the implementation of the policy and on good practice in placement learning is also included in this document. It is planned to enhance this guidance over time and in the light of experience.

2.2 Duration of placements

2.2.1 The normal and minimum lengths of a placement period shall be defined in the relevant block outline and/or the relevant programme specification. Associated contingency arrangements for ensuring the availability of placements together with the consequences, for assessment, of non-completion of the minimum length of placement period shall also be defined in appropriate block or programme documentation (e.g. Placement Handbook).

2.2.2 Placements associated with a placement year (undergraduate programmes)

The University defines a normal total duration for the period of the placement or placements associated with a placement year, which forms the basis for its discussions with potential placement providers. The normal total duration of the placement period is at least 30 weeks (where the student is not paid) or 44 weeks (where the student is paid). Departments may allow students to complete the required number of weeks through two or more shorter periods of placement.

Although all placements should be provided on the above basis, the University also defines a minimum duration of placement activity in which a student must have engaged in order to be eligible to be considered for the award of a degree 'with placement year'. Regardless of whether the student was paid or not while

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https://intra.brunel.ac.uk/safety/policiesandguidance/Documents/SC_1283_Work_Placement%20_%20NOV%202015.doc

on placement, to be eligible to be considered for an award 'with placement year' a student must normally have completed at least 24 weeks in placement. A student having completed fewer than 24 weeks of placement activity will not normally be eligible to be awarded a degree 'with placement year' and will be required to transfer to the variant of the degree without a placement year. Departments may determine that, as a matter of Department policy, the minimum period of placement which must have been completed for a student to be eligible to be awarded a 'degree with placement year' shall be longer than 24 weeks; in this case, the absolute minimum requirement shall be specified in the relevant programme specification.¹

Where placements are undertaken on a part-time basis, for the purposes of calculating the duration of placement learning a week of placement learning is equivalent to 5 full days of work.

2.2.3 Placements associated with postgraduate taught programmes

To be eligible to be considered for a postgraduate award 'with professional experience' or 'development', a student must have completed a minimum of 6 weeks in placement, full-time, paid or unpaid. A student having completed fewer than 6 weeks of placement activity will not normally be eligible to be awarded a postgraduate degree 'with professional experience' or 'development' and will be required to transfer to the variant of the programme without professional experience.

Departments are advised to schedule placement periods associated with postgraduate taught programmes in line with the opportunities available.

International students on a tier 4 visa who wish to undertake a postgraduate taught programme with placement must register initially on the standard programme and then will be permitted to transfer to the 'with professional experience' or 'development' programme following successful acquisition of the placement. In order to allow students on a tier 4 visa the opportunity to transfer to the programme with placement, they must be able to complete all the requirements of the programme, including the placement, before the expiration of their original visa.

2.3 General purposes and benefits of placements

The full purposes and benefits of placements are usually several, will vary between academic discipline and types of placement (see section 2.1), and depend in part on the character of the placement opportunities available. Placements will, however, provide some or all of the following opportunities:

¹ <https://intra.brunel.ac.uk/s/DocumentArchive/Pages/Programme-Documentation-Repository.aspx>

- to gain experience of employment;
- to learn and reflect on academic study in a relevant working environment;
- to develop and test professional competencies;
- further develop skills in 'life-long learning';
- for the student to develop relationships with organisations and professionals within a potential future profession.

It is common for the benefits of a placement to be wider than those associated with the formal assessment. Experience gained on placement will typically be of benefit to students throughout their later study at the University and on their path into and through employment.

3 Design of the formal summative assessment for placement learning

3.1 Formal assessment of placement learning outcomes

As set out in Senate Regulations 2.43-45 and Senate Regulation 3.TBC, there will be formal summative assessment of placement learning which will contribute towards the outcome of the associated award. A clear statement of the learning outcomes associated with the formal assessment of the placement learning, together with the methods of assessment, will be set out in the relevant assessment/modular block outline(s). The contribution of assessment of placement learning towards the award classification will also be reflected in the programme learning outcomes and, for sandwich placements, the classification weighting of the placement learning assessment/modular block(s) shall be defined in the programme specification.

Additional guidance on the development of learning outcomes for sandwich placements (Type 3) and placements associated with postgraduate awards (Type 4) is set out appendix 1 of this policy.

3.2 Assessment of placement learning

The arrangements and requirements for the formal assessment of placement learning will be set out in the relevant programme specification, assessment/modular block outline/s and supporting documentation.

Assessment strategies for placement learning will be transparent about:

- any use of individually-negotiated learning outcomes and/or assessments, and how these are agreed with, and communicated to, the student (and where applicable agreed with, and communicated to, the placement provider) in a timely fashion;
- any use of placement provider judgement in determining the successful academic outcome of placement learning (including any assessment criteria like 'complete x days in placement to satisfaction of placement provider');

- The role of self-reflection by students in the formal assessment of their placement learning, (for example completion of a diary, portfolio etc, while on placement) and agreement of any individually-negotiated learning outcomes and/or assessments (see below);

The formal assessment of placement learning will be subject to external examiner moderation in the normal way.

Guidance notes: in devising assessment schemes for placement learning, and to ensure the robust and equitable formal assessment of students on placement, Departments should consider how they might make the formal assessment of the achievement of placement learning outcomes as far as possible independent of other aspects of the placement.

This equity, robustness and independence will be more readily achieved by the provision, for all students on a programme, of clearly defined placement learning assessment tasks and assessment criteria which directly address the placement learning outcomes defined in the placement learning assessment/modular block outline(s).

The degree to which Departments involve placement providers in the formal assessment of placement learning will differ significantly depending on the type and nature of the placement learning (this involvement can range from no involvement to a major contribution). Where the judgement of the placement provider feeds directly into the assessment, this might require a greater commitment of time from the placement provider, additional training or support for the placement provider, commensurate with the higher level of confidence being placed in the judgement of the placement provider. Where the judgement of the placement provider is collected but feeds indirectly into the formal assessment of a placement, either through being used by the student for self-reflection, or by being used by academic staff in forming their judgement about the achievement of the placement learning outcomes, transparency would still be required in the role of the placement provider, but the expectations placed on the placement provider would be proportionately lower.

4 Before the placement

4.1 Finding and approving placements

All placements covered by this policy (i.e. placements that have associated assessment of placement learning contributing to credit and/or award) must be approved by Departments in accordance with their local procedures. A placement may not be formally commenced before formal discussion has taken place with the student regarding potential issues and risks to consider.

For Type 2 and those Type 1 placements where the placement is concurrent with the associated module/block or the associated module/block is compulsory, the Department shall ensure the provision of appropriate placement opportunities.

For all sandwich placements, placements associated with a postgraduate taught programme, and for those Type 1 placements where the placement is completed before the commencement of the associated optional module/block, it is the responsibility of the student to obtain their own placement.

The student's Department - in collaboration with the Professional Development Centre (PDC) when appropriate - will provide the student with advice on identifying the right kind of placement for them and guidance on obtaining a placement (this might include advice on known vacancies, on making applications, on the preparation of CVs and preparation for the interview process).

Guidance note: For Type 1 and Type 3 placements, Departments may delegate responsibility for the approval of potential placements in whole or in part to the PDC.

If a placement is not approved by the Department, the placement cannot commence. If a student engages in work experience that is not an approved placement, the student will be deemed not to have undertaken a placement and will be unable to satisfy the requirements for the associated placement-learning assessment. A student in this situation will normally be required to transfer to the variant of the degree without the placement element.

Where a student's ability to engage fully with the formal assessment of placement learning would be compromised by external constraints such as a non-disclosure or confidentiality policy of the placement provider, the Department should satisfy itself that robust assessment of the learning outcomes for the placement learning can take place.

4.2 Preparation of students for placement

The following types of preparation should be made available by the University to all students undertaking a placement activity which contributes to the formal assessment of a programme once the placement has been identified:

- general preparation for commencing a placement. This should include:
 - Appropriate briefing on health and safety considerations;
 - Briefing on the expectations of the University towards the students as its 'ambassadors';
 - Identification of particular expectations of the University, and any relevant professional standards or codes of practice, which relate to student conduct on placement;
- specific preparation for the assessment of the placement learning:
 - Familiarisation with any special requirements for self-directed learning;
 - Familiarisation with the role of the placement provider in the assessment process, if any.

Guidance note: Departments (in consultation with the PDC) may determine how this preparation is best delivered (for example through the use of lectures, the distribution of information on paper, or the availability of on-line resources). Departments will need to determine any particular 'checks' which should be built into the delivery of key parts of the preparation (for example, the recording of attendance at certain lectures, the designation of a pre-placement module as a pre-requisite to the placement module, signing to confirm receipt of documentation by the students).

5 Commencement of Placement

5.1 Responsibilities of the University and the placement provider on placement commencement

Responsibilities of the University:

- determining and communicating to the student (and placement provider) the constituent assessment elements, and schedule of, assessment (see below);
- ensuring students are aware of their responsibilities on placement (including those relating to the assessment of their placement, as well as health and safety, insurance, professional codes of practice, etc);
- ensuring that students are aware of the sources of academic support available to them while on placement (see section below);
- ensuring that students are aware of other necessary or useful sources of information available to them;
- ensuring that placement providers are aware of their responsibilities during the placement, including those relating to health and safety¹ and students with disabilities;
- ensuring that placement providers are aware of the basic requirements of the student on placement (educational and, where appropriate, practical, such as any need to attend activities on campus during the placement year).

Responsibilities of the placement provider:

- setting out and communicating to the student their expectations in respect of the duration of, and duties associated with, the placement.

¹ See [Health & Safety Work Placement Policy](#)

6 During the placement

6.1 Responsibilities of the University, the student and the placement provider during the placement

Responsibilities of the University:

- providing appropriate information and ongoing support to students (see below) and placement providers;
- the formal assessment of the placement learning;

Responsibilities of the student:

- engage with the requirements for the assessment of their placement learning and seek support or guidance from the University on this learning, or the placement provider, as appropriate;
- abide by the responsibilities of the placement as set out by the placement provider, in accordance with applicable laws;
- observe relevant professional codes of practice while on placement and, in accordance with applicable laws, to adhere to the expectations of the placement provider with regard to professional behaviour in the workplace;

Responsibilities of the placement provider:

- supporting, where reasonable and practicable, the educational purposes of the student while on placement;
- (where provided for by the agreed assessment scheme) contributing to the formal assessment of the placement learning of the student.

Support for students on placement

The support offered to students on placement by the University should cover at least the following:

1. Support for students when starting and settling into placements;
2. A mechanism by which students may maintain regular routine contact, and get routine support (e.g. via the WWW, telephone, email, Skype);
3. Advice on dealing with urgent issues or concerns during a placement (including advice on dealing with urgent issues during periods when support from the University may not be immediately available, such as the Christmas closure period).

Departments will determine and communicate to students and placement providers the arrangements for the provision of this support, and whether, and in what circumstances, it would include workplace visits by members of University staff.

Guidance note: Departments need to ensure that necessary kinds of support are available to students who are on placement. The frequency, timing and purpose of any visits of University staff to the student in the workplace needs to reflect this overall strategy for support. Appropriate alternative mechanisms should be put in place where visits do not form part of the support normally available to students.

7 Following the placement

7.1 Monitoring of placements

Departments and/or the PDC, as appropriate, should have mechanisms in place for end-of-placement monitoring to determine any changes which might be required to the placement opportunity if a student were to be placed again with the same placement provider.

In addition, other kinds of monitoring and reporting may take place at the end of a placement which are not part of the formal assessment of the placement learning. This might include the provision of formative feedback by the placement provider to the student or to the University.

7.2 Process if placement is terminated prematurely by a student or by a placement provider

Where a placement is terminated prematurely by a student or placement provider (i.e. is ended prior to the previously agreed duration for the placement), the Department will:

- initiate a process to identify from the student and the placement provider the reasons for the premature termination of the placement;
- identify and act on any issues arising from the termination relating to the student's studies. This might include: (1) instigating the transfer of the student to the variant of the programme without placement learning; (2) advising the student regarding further opportunities to undertake a placement in order to fulfil at least the minimum number of weeks of placement required under this policy;
- consider whether there may be any student disciplinary matters arising from the premature termination of the placement (see below).
- identify and act on any issues arising from the termination relating to the placement provider. This might include reviewing (in consultation with the placement provider) the profile of the student who might be sought to fill the same placement in the future.

7.3 Student disciplinary matters and placements

- The University expects students to observe relevant professional codes of practice while on placement and, in accordance with applicable laws, to adhere to the expectations of the placement provider with regard to professional behaviour in the workplace. Evidence of unprofessional

behaviour might include early termination of a placement by a student where this has not been agreed in advance with the placement provider.

- the University may take action under Senate Regulation 6 to investigate and impose penalties on students who are suspected of acting in an unprofessional manner, or in a manner likely to bring the University into disrepute, while on an approved placement (SR6.16).

7.4 Records of achievement on placements

For sandwich placements (Type 3) and placements associated with postgraduate awards (Type 4), a student's full transcript of study will normally include a record of any placement module/block that is commenced, even if it is not successfully completed for any reason. Where there is good reason to do so, the relevant College Education Committee may determine to remove the record of an unsuccessful placement module/block at the point when a student is transferred to the non-placement variant of the degree.

For all other types of placement (Types 1 and 2), the transcript will always include a record of any placement module/block that is undertaken.

Appendix I: Guidance on defining Programme Learning Outcomes relating to sandwich placements (Type 3) and placements associated with postgraduate awards (Type 4)

Please note that this guidance is designed for sandwich programme placements (Type 3) and postgraduate programmes with professional development or experience (type 4) but may be useful in considering short placements (Type 1). Learning outcomes for professional placement learning (Type 2) will normally be prescribed by appropriate professional and/or statutory bodies.

It is very important to recognise that the assessment is that of the placement learning, not of the placement itself. This ensures that the assessment of the placement is independent of variations in the placement context.

The assessment of the placement learning will be implemented by a set of Placement Learning Assessment Tasks, which should be well specified, as for all other summatively assessed tasks. These might take the form of e.g., assignments, mini-projects, portfolios, reflective essays, presentations.

Learning outcomes associated with Placement Learning will be specified at (at least) two levels of abstraction:

- Programme Learning Outcomes;
- Module/Block Learning Outcomes.

The programme learning outcomes are deliberately abstracted away from assessment/modular block learning outcomes, the latter potentially being directly assessed by the assessment tasks.

The programme learning outcomes associated with placement learning are exactly the outcomes which differentiate the award with placement from the standard award and thus identify outcomes which would not normally be demonstrated by students who have followed the non-placement programme.

In order to assist programme designers, a set of generic programme learning outcomes have been developed. These are not intended to be used directly in a programme specification; rather, they should be used as prompts in defining an appropriate set of programme learning outcomes for a particular programme. It should also be noted that it may be appropriate in the case of some programmes to define a programme learning outcome(s) which requires a student to use their academic discipline knowledge in a placement context.

A. Knowledge and Understanding relating to:

- the “world of work” and their place in it.
- synergies and conflicts between academia and industry, commerce, etc (as appropriate)
- a profession or professions in terms of the context, constraints, pressures, rewards and opportunities.

- an organisation (in general or particular) in terms of its strategic and operational context, its nature, its drives, problems, challenges and structure.

B. Cognitive Skills such as:

- the ability to analyse (at the appropriate level) issues encountered in an employment context from an academic perspective.
- the ability to analyse (at the appropriate level) issues encountered in an academic context from an employment perspective.

C. Other Skills such as the ability to:

- engage in self-directed, informal learning.
- adapt to professional/organisational environments/expectations.

Above all, programme-level outcomes need to be valid for any and all placements in which you might place students registered for the programme in question. This would not preclude the possibility, if it seems appropriate, of employing, at the module/assessment block level, individually-negotiated learning outcomes, or selecting learning outcomes from an agreed range (provided these are consistent with the programme-level learning outcomes).

As an example of how an individual programme specification might use the above generic learning outcomes, the following might be helpful:

A. Knowledge & Understanding of

- An employing organisation, its operational context and the issues it faces.
- How issues encountered in an employment context relate to research/theories in [insert name of discipline]

B. Cognitive (thinking) skills

Able to:

- Analyse issues encountered in an employment context from an academic perspective.

C. Other Skills and Attributes (Practical/Professional/Transferable)

Able to:

- Successfully engage in informal, self-directed learning.
- Adapt to different employment environments and organisational expectations.