

Quality Standards for Work-based and Placement Learning

1 Preamble

1.1 The following quality standards relate to programmes of study (courses or modules) that include opportunities for work-based learning (wbl), and/or placements, which may or may not be work-based.

1.2 In addition to explaining the quality standards, this document is intended to highlight all key considerations and provide links to further guidance for all staff with courses offering placements or work-based learning.

1.3 The quality standards relate to the University's strategic objective of providing an outstanding student experience and the key institutional risks of: failure to provide an outstanding experience, leading to decline in levels of recruitment, retention and achievement, and student satisfaction (2); failure to achieve (and meet the needs of) a diverse student population (3); failure to comply with legislative framework (6); and poor quality assessments (8).¹

1.4 The intended audience for the quality standards is academic and learning support staff, including those involved in the design, approval and review of courses.

2 Introduction

2.1 The *QAA Code of practice Section 9 Work-based and placement learning*² (September 2007) provides the basis for the following definitions:

- Work-based learning is learning that is integral to a higher education programme, and which is based in the workplace and assessed and credited as part of the University programme. It is usually achieved and demonstrated through engagement with a workplace environment, the assessment of reflective practice and the designation of appropriate learning outcomes
- Placement learning is a planned specific period of learning, normally outside of the institution at which the student is enrolled or engaged in learning, and where any learning is an intended and integral part of the learning outcomes of the programme of study.

2.2 Placements can include work-based learning but work-based learning need not be through a work placement. Work-based and placement learning can range from a single module or part of a module within a course to an entire course that is work-based. It includes short and extended placements or periods of experience and practice within the workplace (or elsewhere), mandatory or optional modules/units, full-time or part-time,

¹ University of Worcester – Institutional Risk Register

² Available at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section9/default.asp>

paid and unpaid work, as well as exchanges or placements abroad, including where students arrange their own placement/work-based learning opportunity with a placement/wbl provider with the approval of the University. Placements can take place within the University – for example, a student could undertake a placement in one of the service departments of the University.

2.3 The precepts of this document do not automatically extend to situations where students in employment or undertaking voluntary activities have the responsibility for demonstrating to the University that through the nature of their learning opportunities they are able to achieve specific module or course learning outcomes, often referred to as learning from work, eg by carrying out a work-related project. Careful judgement in the interpretation and application of the quality standards will be necessary on a programme by programme basis, within the context of due diligence and the need to ensure that the arrangements for assuring quality and standards of wbl/placement learning should be as rigorous, secure and open to scrutiny as those for conventional University based programmes of learning. The principles of 'risk assessment' in relation to both health and safety, and academic standards and quality should be applied in all cases. It is the responsibility of the course validation/review panel to confirm the extent to which the quality standards should apply.

2.4 The purpose of the standards is to:

- state explicitly principles of good practice to ensure high quality in learning that is work-based and/or related to a placement opportunity
- embed the precepts of the *QAA Code of practice, section 9: Work-based and placement learning* in UW processes and practices
- assist course teams in designing programmes which include work-based learning and/or placements
- provide benchmarks for validation panels in the approval and quality assurance of programmes that include work-based learning /placement elements.

2.5 All courses which involve placements must take account of the [UCEA/USHA Health and Safety Guidance for the placement of HE students](#). All courses involving placements or work-based learning opportunities that take place outside of the UK must take account of the guidance provided by the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) on issues related to [risk assessment of student activity abroad](#) (<http://www.ukcosa.org.uk>).³

2.6 Guidance on the content of student guides for placement opportunities is attached at Annexe 1. Guidance from Personnel on [work placement and field trips](#) is available.

2.7 Further guidance on developing courses or modules with work-based learning and/or placement opportunities can be obtained from the Academic Development and Practice Unit (ADPU).

2.8 The following quality standards are both a guide and checklist for course development teams and also a checklist for validation and review panels.

³ Note that you will need to contact either the Admissions Office or the International Office to obtain details of the username and password to access the guidance under 'student activity abroad: risk assessment' in the members' area.

3 Programme Design and Delivery

3.1 The relative responsibilities of the University, including the wbl/placement co-ordinator, the wbl/placement provider, the students, and any other parties, for the wbl/placement learning must be clearly defined and understood by all parties (see 2 below).

3.2 The intended learning outcomes for work-based learning or placement opportunities should contribute to the overall aims of the programme, and any assessment of the work-based or placement learning should be part of a coherent assessment strategy for the programme. Where aims and learning outcomes and/or assessment methods are negotiated, there should be clear processes for establishing the learning contract that governs the learning experience in these terms.

3.3 Requirements for compliance with relevant health and safety and equalities legislation and guidance must be appropriately specified and documented for all parties.

3.4 Procedures for securing/allocating and criteria/procedures for the approval of wbl/placements, including consequences for students of failure to secure or complete a suitable wbl/placement must be specified.

3.5 Details of how the wbl/placement learning is to be assessed and the arrangements for internal and external moderation, including the role of the external examiner(s) must be stipulated.

4 Responsibilities

4.1 Students should be made aware of their responsibilities prior to commencing a period of wbl or a placement, including their responsibilities:

- as representatives of the University and, where appropriate, the partner institution
- towards the wbl/placement provider and its customers/clients/patients and employees
- in relation to health and safety and related risks, including in relation to themselves
- for managing their learning and professional relationships
- for appropriate understanding and awareness of ethical and health and safety issues
- for recording their progress and achievements
- for alerting the wbl/placement provider and University to problems with the wbl/placement that might prevent the progress or satisfactory completion of the wbl/placement.

4.2 Students should also be made aware of their rights concerning a period of wbl or a placement, including their rights:

- to a safe working environment, and
- to be treated in accordance with applicable legislation.

4.3 Course teams must ensure that the responsibilities of wbl/placement providers are clearly and explicitly defined and agreed in writing in relation to:

- the learning opportunities they are expected to provide
- their role in supporting and/or assessing the student's learning and progress
- health and safety law, including adequate induction and training for students.

4.4 Course teams must have mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating wbl/placement providers, including mechanisms for student/ work-based mentor/ employer feedback in place.

4.5 Institutes must ensure that staff involved in identifying, supporting and assessing wbl/placement learning opportunities (including staff in the provider organisation) will have the appropriate skills and competencies, and receive appropriate guidance, training and development to support effective practice.

5 Information, Support and Guidance for Students

5.1 Students must be provided with appropriate and timely guidance and support in preparation for, during, and after their wbl/placements.

5.2 All students undertaking a placement or wbl period should be issued, well before the start of the period, with a document clarifying the requirements for securing and approving a placement or wbl opportunity and any regulations governing the wbl/placement, together with information on the relative responsibilities of the University, the student and the wbl or placement provider.

5.3 Students must be provided with an appropriate induction to the work-based or placement environment, including health and safety information and management of associated risks, and information about the learning support available to them from the University and the placement/wbl provider.

5.4 There should be clear guidance for students, including a named University contact, on action to take should they encounter any difficulties with the placement or wbl opportunity.

6 Information, Support and Guidance for Work-Based Learning and Placement Providers

6.1 Placement/wbl providers and mentors/supervisors must be provided with appropriate and timely guidance and support in preparation for, during and after the students' work-based learning or placement.

6.2 Placement/wbl providers must be informed of the designated member of staff for the course/academic Institute with responsibility for managing wbl/placements, and/or the named contact for students and for wbl/placement providers.

6.3 Placement/wbl mentors (or equivalent) must be provided with documentation clarifying the roles and responsibilities for providing appropriate learning opportunities and for supporting and, where relevant, assessing students.

6.4 Placement/wbl providers/mentors (or equivalent) should be provided with appropriate guidance, training and support to carry out any assessment related functions.

6.5 Placement/wbl providers should be given clear information about the action to take if they are no longer able to offer wbl/placement learning opportunities as well as the procedures for reporting information about student progress, and for providing feedback on the wbl/placement process.

6.6 All parties in placement learning should be made aware of the University's Complaints Procedure.

7 Validation and Quality Assurance Processes

7.1 The design, management and organisation of work-based or placement learning may involve one or more partners (partner institution and/or employer). The University, as the awarding institution, retains ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the intended learning outcomes are appropriate in terms of academic standards and for ensuring that the wbl/placement provides adequate opportunities for the learning outcomes to be achieved, but it may do so in collaboration with partners. The responsible University academic Institute must ensure that there is clarity about responsibilities and that these are agreed and understood – normally through a partnership/course agreement, student/employer handbooks and/or learning contracts.

7.2 The validation panel will normally receive in addition to the programme (and/or module) specification and course proposal document, the following:

- the draft student handbook for the work-based learning/placement element of the course
- the draft employer/mentor handbook (or equivalent documentation).

7.3 Course teams/Institutes will define procedures for the quality assurance (approval and monitoring) of individual wbl/placement opportunities. Criteria for the approval of wbl/placements should include the providers' ability to:

- provide the learning opportunities that enable the learning outcomes to be achieved
- support students during the period of wbl/placement
- fulfil their responsibilities under health and safety and equalities legislation in the workplace.

Where a student is required, or opts, to find their own wbl/placement provider, they should be given appropriate guidance and the wbl/placement provider should be approved by the course team/Institute.

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Annexe 1

INDICATIVE CONTENT OF STUDENT GUIDE FOR PLACEMENT LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

- 1 Details of the placement/wbl process including:
 - how details of placements/wbl opportunities will be made available to students;
 - the mechanisms for students to apply for specific placements/wbl opportunities, and/or requirements in relation to approval of student arranged placements/wbl opportunities;
 - guidance on preparation of a CV and for placement/wbl interviews, if appropriate;
 - provision for the development of additional skills if appropriate (e.g. language support, cultural orientation);
 - need for personal insurance cover, particularly when on placement abroad, if appropriate;
 - the student's obligations in respect of health and safety, particularly in the new environment, and any occupational health considerations or requirements, including immunisation, if relevant;
 - any special obligations which may apply relating to, for example, legal, ethical or confidentiality issues;
 - the stage at which a student is obliged to accept a placement/wbl opportunity, and the consequences of a refusal at this stage;
 - implications of failure to secure an appropriate placement/wbl opportunity.
- 2 The length of the placement/wbl period.
- 3 The requirements for completion of health and safety and any other checks, eg security or criminal records checks, at the start of a placement or period of work-based learning.
- 4 Any arrangements for time off during the placement/wbl period.
- 5 The placement/wbl learning outcomes and how these relate to the aims and learning outcomes for the programme (or in the case of a learning contract yet to be finalised, how and when the learning outcomes will be determined).
- 6 The requirements for evidence of meeting learning outcomes (or how and when these will be determined).
- 7 Assessment details and criteria (or how and when these will be determined).
- 8 Arrangements for maintaining regular contact with the student throughout the period of the placement/wbl and when/if they may expect a visit from a University placement tutor.
- 9 What to do in the case of a problem arising which has the potential to seriously affect their work on the placement.

- 10 Telephone number and e-mail contact details for University staff.
- 11 Students' position during placement in respect of:
- any grant or funding they may receive, and how receipt of salary may affect this;
 - income tax, forms P50 and P60;
 - holidays during the placement;
 - University fees and University services that remain available to students during the placement (e.g. Library access).
- 12 Students should also receive from the placement provider a letter:
- confirming their placement, and dates;
 - stating the time, place and person to whom to report on the first day;
 - stating any salary to be paid;
 - details of any specific clothing requirements if these are to be met by the student.