

INFORMATION FOR UNIVERSITY-BASED PLACEMENT ORGANISERS AND ADVISORS

These guidelines are written for placement years, although they may also be applicable for placement units.

The sections of these guidelines outlined in boxes throughout the text indicate the university's **minimum requirements** for the operation of student placements.

Schools that have placements are required to appoint a placement organiser to ensure that the procedures set out in these guidelines are applied to each placement.

The Bristol Abroad team has the role of the placement organiser for all students whose study placement is organised as part of the official university led Study Abroad, Work Abroad or Volunteer Abroad Programmes.

A [Guide to setting up activities with partners](#) is available. Schools should also draw up standard operating procedures such that new placement organisers have a template to follow, and to ensure that specific guidance is provided on local process and approval. This could involve a database of placements with appropriate information and detailed guidance on health, safety and insurance matters (see below). Schools should also ensure that written agreements are put in place with placement providers.

The university is responsible for the academic standards of its awards and the quality of provision leading to them, both at university and on placement. Placement organisers are advised to read in full the work-based learning guidance section of the QAA UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/work-based-learning>

The following organisation provides information which may also be helpful to placement organisers, particularly those new to the role:

- The Association for Sandwich Education and Training (ASET), www.asetonline.org, ASET has Good Practice Advice available at <https://www.asetonline.org/resources/aset-publications/>

In addition to a responsibility for academic standards, placement organisers and advisors should be aware of, and should ensure that students and placement providers are aware of, the health and safety issues surrounding placements and of the necessity for insurance cover appropriate to the circumstances of particular placements. Placement organisers and advisors must also request the placement provider's policies and procedures for preventing and responding to harassment and sexual misconduct including their Sexual Harassment policy, in accordance with the Worker Protection (Amendment of the Equality Act 2010) and Office for Students (OfS) Condition of Registration E6.

1. Health and Safety (H&S)

The Head of School must appoint one or more placement organisers who are competent and have an understanding of health and safety legislative requirements. Placement organisers may benefit from participating in the placement organisers network which includes placement

organisers from across the institution. Placement organisers need to be able to identify from information provided from the placement provider any possible basic health and safety shortcomings within a placement workplace or institution and make informed decisions, knowing where to access further advice if required.

The university's Health and Safety Organisation policy states that Heads of Schools need to provide for the health and safety of students as far as reasonably practicable. Accordingly, all schools must implement the following 4-step approach:

- a) The placement organiser must implement as robust a procedure as possible to assess health and safety procedures in force at the placement as regards the student. This may be done in a variety of ways and the method chosen is a matter for local management, but this must be a risk-based decision;
- b) All students are briefed on relevant health and safety issues before the placement commences;
- c) Placements are approved, monitored and reviewed;
- d) Placement organisers make aware to students how academic and wellbeing support can be accessed whilst they are on placement

It is the role of the placement organiser to assess the placement and consider whether there are any major risks and whether suitable controls have been identified to mitigate those risks. The major risks and controls will be linked to the programme subjects, and the controls will have generic themes dictated by the school and the placement provider.

School and Service Safety Advisors (SSAs) and the [Safety and Health Services](#) are a useful source of help and information regarding the expected health and safety standards that should be met in placement workplaces. The identification of these major risks and verification of appropriate controls must be done, so far as possible, prior to taking up the placement. Methods of identifying major risks and verifying controls must be developed and owned locally. Safety and Health Services can provide the name of the SSA on their central records if requested.

The appropriate mechanism will vary between programmes and schools. For some placements it may be appropriate to set out in writing the university requirements relating to the health and safety of the student in advance of the placement. For other schools/ programmes a visit by the placement organiser to the provider prior to the placement that includes a health and safety review may be more appropriate. Alternatively, and particularly relevant to placements overseas, a questionnaire and answer form may be used to establish basic information on health and safety and insurance.

Full advice and templates on how to follow these requirements are contained in the Student Placement Health and Safety Guidance Note available on the Safety and Health Services web site <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/safety/staff/travel/> (please note this guidance is currently unavailable as it is being re-written. Queries should be sent to Safety and Health Services in the meantime). Staff are also advised that to address specific placement issues they should seek guidance from their professional and accrediting bodies where appropriate

2. Insurance

Placement organisers should read the detailed guidance on insurance for student placements on the Office of the University Secretary's website:

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/insurance/information-for-students/>

This comprises insurance guidance as regards legal liability (including professional indemnity/malpractice), travel and health insurance risks.

Schools should address any additional questions regarding insurance to the University Insurance Officer.

3. Other non-academic requirements

Each field of work, and each country, has its own culture, customs, norms and expectations. These may be unfamiliar to students and should be made explicit.

In certain circumstances, placements may involve other specific requirements. For example, work in hospitals or some laboratories may require Hepatitis B vaccination, work with children may require clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service and work that is commercially sensitive may require the signing of confidentiality agreements. Also, many professional bodies, chartered institutes etc. have specific requirements for students working towards professional recognition/affiliation/membership.

4. Criteria for the approval of placement opportunities

The university expects that schools establish and maintain relationships with organisations or departments whose missions and national or international standing are comparable with its own. Schools should determine that the placement provider is able to:

- Provide learning opportunities which enable the intended learning outcomes to be achieved;
- Support students during their placement;
- Fulfil their responsibilities under health and safety legislation, having regard to the level of skills and experience of placement students.

In addition, schools should:

- Take reasonable steps to ensure that students are placed in an environment where they are treated equally, regardless of protected characteristics such as nationality, race, sex, disability etc, i.e. that placements comply with legislation such as the UK Equality Act;
- As far as possible, assess the facilities available for students (e.g. library and computing provision, teaching facilities, laboratory facilities, working environment etc) and that those facilities are available for students who have support requirements due to a disability;
- Ensure that placements fulfil the requirements of relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies;
- Ensure that the mission, aims and ethos of placement providers are compatible with those of the University and that the University will not be brought into disrepute by working with a particular placement provider. If there is any uncertainty, schools should discuss this with their Faculty Academic Director (Programmes, Curriculum and Assessment);
- Work with the Visa Compliance team to ensure international students doing placements have the correct visa to be able to work during their placement year.

5. International placements

International placements can provide particularly valuable learning opportunities. The University recognises that both its degree programmes and individual students are enriched by the experiences and opportunities offered by international placements.

However, overseas placements and foreign travel can carry additional risks. Staff and students need to be aware of, and as far as reasonably practicable to avoid, or mitigate for potential risks. Placement organisers and students are recommended to consider amongst other things:

- Language skills required
- Travel costs
- Placement fees and any specific funding
- Accommodation
- Medical insurance (if required)
- Visas (if required)
- Travel insurance
- Any country specific or local risks
- Disability and wellbeing support while away from the university
- Getting confirmation that the activity to be undertaken has been approved at the appropriate level within the placement provider
- How contact will be maintained with the student
- How contact will be maintained in an emergency

Placement organisers should keep up-to-date records of student locations and escalate any serious risks or emergencies to the Faculty Office for consideration of actions required. The Faculty Office can liaise with Security Services as needed if serious incidents occur overseas. Placement organisers should also ensure students are aware of the requirement to download the [SafeZone app](#) when overseas, which allows students to contact the University's Security Services if they are in need of urgent help.

In addition, the following external websites, and links contained within them, provide both awareness of potential risks and advice on sensible precautions:

- The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO): <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>
Placements are not usually permitted in countries on the FCDO list where all or all but essential travel is not advised.
- The World Health Organisation: www.who.int/en/
- The NHS website on health abroad includes guidance on healthcare when living abroad, [Healthcare abroad - NHS](#)

The university recognises that health and safety regulations vary throughout the world and that standards in some countries may be different from those in the UK. Placements in more remote areas may be difficult to monitor (in terms of both health and safety and quality assurance).

6. Academic elements of placements

As mentioned in section 4 above, the school has responsibility to ensure that the academic elements of placements are satisfactory. The following summarises the threshold requirements in this area.

6.1 Placement content

Schools must establish with the placement provider in advance that the placement content will fulfil the student's learning needs and that it is in alignment with the requirements of any

professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB) accrediting the student's programme. Intended learning outcomes should also be agreed in advance between the University school and the placement provider.

6.2 Assessment

Appropriate assessment of placement learning and informing students and placement providers of their role in assessment processes. Where placement providers are involved in assessment, the university may provide guidelines or training on this. Assessment can be by (but is not limited to) learning log, work journal, portfolio, poster or PowerPoint presentation, project report, research paper/dissertation, interview/viva, supervisor's report, or by providing other evidence of learning and development. Schools will ensure that any assessment of students carried out by the placement provider adheres to the approved assessment methods for the programme/unit and that the external assessors have early access to university, faculty and school assessment guidelines. Schools should assure themselves of the capability and expertise of the placement provider in conducting any assessment.

6.3 Academic credit

Schools should ensure that any marks awarded for placement learning are transferable and correlate to the overall marking structure of the student's programme. Where a department is not certain about the equivalence/comparability of marks awarded it should consider alternative ways of taking account of placement study. For example, it may choose to award credit points on the basis of a pass but not count the actual mark towards the student's final result; or set a separate assessment task, the marks from which then contribute to the student's final mark.

7. Support for Students on Placement

Schools must ensure that the students have access to appropriate facilities, information and support while on the placement.

Arrangements for personal tutoring and academic support must continue for the duration that the student is on their placement. If the student is on placement abroad, the school should consider how they will maintain academic support mechanisms, especially where there is a time difference.

Students will still have access to student support services, such as the wellbeing service. Where students are on placement at different geographical locations, with the UK or overseas, support services can be engaged with remotely.

8. Students with disabilities

Placement organisers should consider students who have support requirements due to a disability. Please also consult the Disability Services website for additional assistance: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/disability-services/>

By law, students cannot be required to disclose their disability. However, it is reasonable to encourage students to do so to ensure that support can be provided. Students should have an identified route for disclosing, for example via their personal tutor to the placement organiser, or to the placement organiser direct. Placement organisers should then discuss placement

arrangements with the student and potential placement providers. Practical assistance regarding equipment etc. may be sought from the University's Disability Services.

9. Managing placements

Good practice in the management of placements includes the following:

- Briefing prospective placement students, including the provision of up-to-date information on host institutions and feedback from previous placement students. Where appropriate, central services such as the Safety and Health Services, the International Office and Careers Service can provide pre-placement briefings;
- Providing students with help in writing CVs, applications, covering letters, mock interviews; the University Careers Service can help with these;
- Building and maintaining constructive relationships with placement providers;
- Defining, as far as possible, intended learning outcomes and making these clear to placement providers and students, helping students to consider their placements as valuable learning opportunities;
- Provision of a school handbook of information for placement providers and students, which might include intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria, the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders, a placement timetable, checklist, contact information, what to do in case of emergencies or problems etc.;
- Ensuring that contact details of students and their placement supervisors/line managers are maintained and up to date;
- Maintaining contact with placement students through email, phone, websites and/or placement visits, as appropriate. Encouraging reflection and self-awareness of learning and development. As far as possible, keeping abreast of students' achievements and any problems;
- Implementing any improvements to the placements scheme, as necessary.

10. Terminating a placement

Most placements run smoothly. When minor issues do arise, all parties should first attempt to resolve these through dialogue. However, there are a few situations that may result in the termination of a placement. For example, personal circumstances may mean that a student is unable to continue with their placement or commercial circumstances may arise that mean a placement provider is no longer able to host a student.

More importantly, there may be concerns about the quality of a particular placement in terms of the learning opportunities it offers or the adequacy of its health and safety provision.

Schools should monitor placement learning as part of the Annual Programme Review (APR) process and raise any problems with the placement provider immediately as they arise. Any actions in this area should be recorded in the Schools' Education Action Plan (EAP).

Learning opportunities/learning potential

Placements differ in the learning opportunities they offer. Placements that involve students in challenging, interesting and varied experiences, in situations where they and their learning are

well-supported, have high potential for learning. Placements that offer only mundane, routine or repetitive experiences, or where students do not feel adequately supported, have low learning potential. It may be necessary to terminate a placement if its learning potential is too low and cannot be improved. This is a matter of academic standards and quality assurance; placements offering only poor learning opportunities should be avoided in future.

Health and safety provision

It may also be necessary to terminate a placement in the rare event that a student is exposed to significant health and safety risks without effective adequate controls in place. The placement organiser or a visiting tutor must discuss any concerns identified with the placement provider to seek immediate improvements. It may be necessary to withdraw the student if there are any unresolved health and safety concerns. The School or Service Safety Advisor (SSA) and members of Safety and Health Services will be able to provide advice to placement organisers in reaching the major decision to withdraw a student. Once a student has been removed from a placement, the placement organiser should arrange a debriefing session with appropriate members of staff and the student. Consideration must be given to not sending another student to that placement in the future.

Terminating a placement could have serious implications affecting the student's programme of study and this therefore emphasises how important it is to ensure initially that placement providers have high standards of health and safety.