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PLACEMENT LEARNING POLICY

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Introduction

Our Strategy: The Way Forward [2018-2023: Recast COVID-19](#)

Our vision is to be a world-leading, research-excellent, educationally outstanding university, driven by creativity and curiosity, which fulfils its social, cultural and economic obligations to Cardiff, Wales, the UK and the world. By fulfilling our vision, we expect to improve our standing as one of the top 100 universities in the world and the top 20 in the UK.

The Way Forward [2018-2023: Recast COVID-19](#) outlines the guiding principles for the way we put this vision into practice, and includes performance indicators that will help us gauge our progress. Our revised [Education and Students Sub-strategy](#) will re-prioritise activity to provide our students with the highest quality experience possible given the constraints of the Covid-19 crisis, whilst preserving our academic standards and integrity.

We will achieve this through change in six main areas:

- Creating an inclusive learning community
- Enhancing the learning environment
- Planning for successful student futures
- Valuing and promoting teaching excellence
- Supporting student life and learning community
- Valuing our students as partners

The 'planning for successful student futures' work stream includes a commitment to sourcing a wide range of domestic and international placement opportunities in all sectors, available in traditional, virtual, and blended formats.

Institutional oversight

The Placement Learning Policy (the Policy) has been endorsed by the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) in April 2017 (updated in October 2021).¹ It will be kept under regular review to ensure it continues both to support internal processes that function efficiently and effectively, and to fully meet the requirements of the [revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#), with the expectations and practices noted in the supporting advice and guidance on [Work-based Learning](#) being particularly relevant.

The principles have been mapped against the UK Quality Code expectations and core and common practices alongside the supporting advice and guidance on [Course Design and Development](#), [Partnerships](#), [Research Degrees](#), [Monitoring and Evaluation](#) and [Assessment](#), [Enabling Student Achievement](#), and [Student Engagement](#) as appropriate.

| Expectations for standards | Expectations for quality |
|--|---|
| The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework. | Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed. |
| The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards. | From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education. |
| Core practices for standards | Core practices for quality |
| Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them. | The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system. |
| The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers. | Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them. |
| | The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students. |

¹ Amendments to this policy may be made by the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC). All amendments will be communicated to the College Pro Vice-Chancellors and Heads of Schools by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education & Students).

| Common practices for standards | Common practices for quality |
|---|---|
| The provider reviews its core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement. | The provider's approach to managing quality takes account of external expertise. |
| | The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience. |

SECTION 1: Scope

From 1 August 2017 (updated August 2020), the Policy provides a framework for the development and management of placement provision. The purpose of the Policy is to ensure that Cardiff University can discharge effectively its responsibilities for the academic standards of awards and the quality of learning opportunities provided for students, thereby ensuring that the programmes offered by the University are comparable to cognate provision offered elsewhere. In addition, the Policy reflects the University's responsibilities when making changes to existing provision under [consumer protection law](#).

The Policy builds on the processes and procedures outlined in the [Collaborative Provision Policy](#) and the [Programme Development Policy](#). In addition, it is expected that placement activity should be developed with reference to other relevant Cardiff University policy documents, including:

- [Academic Regulations](#);
- [Principles-on-Programme-Design-and-Graduate-Attributes](#)
- [Responsibilities and expectations of research degrees](#);
- [Study Abroad Policy](#);
- Guidance relating to [Teaching and supporting students](#).

The QAA defines work-based learning as:

*"...learning through work, learning for work and/or learning at work. It consists of authentic structured opportunities for learning which are achieved in a workplace setting or are designed to meet an identified workplace need."*²

Building on this definition, the University regards the key features of a work placement as being:

- It is an activity supported by the University (i.e. the placement is only available to the student by virtue of being a student at Cardiff).
- It includes an element of externality (i.e. the student is required to engage with an organisation external to the University³ or undertakes an activity external to their programme of study⁴).
- It involves a commitment of at least 35 hours.

Any placement that incorporates all these key features will contribute towards the measurement of University placement activity, regardless of whether it is undertaken as part of the student's programme of study or as an extra-curricular activity. Similarly, activities that incorporate all of the key features, but which are described using different terminology (e.g. internships), are regarded as placements for the purposes of this Policy. Therefore, the continuum of placement activity includes:

² *Work-based Learning Advice and Guidance* (QAA, November 2018) (p.2).

³ A placement within a University Division would also be treated as being with an 'external' organisation, and, therefore, the relevant provisions of the Policy would apply to the placement.

⁴ Such as CUROP or CUSEIP projects.

- learning that involves external organisations in the commissioning of ‘live’ briefs or projects;⁵
- practice-based placements that are integrated within the programme of study and usually mandated by a professional regulator;⁶
- work-based placements where the work the student undertakes will provide a key source for their learning;⁷
- activities undertaken, in addition to the student’s programme of study, which support the development of the skills and attributes necessary to transition into the world of work.⁸

Similarly, the placement may be undertaken in the UK or overseas. Where the placement is overseas then it is likely that it will contribute to the measurement of both the University’s placement activity and international mobility.⁹

Where the University supports a placement, which does not include all of the key features noted above, then the placement should still be reviewed to ensure that it complies with the relevant provisions of the Policy.

The key features of both credit bearing and non-credit bearing placements supported by the University are summarised in the [Taxonomy of Placement Provision](#).

Terminology

The guiding principles adopted in the Policy are drawn from the QAA’s advice and guidance on work-based learning. The QAA uses the terms ‘education organisation’ and ‘employer’ throughout. In the Policy:

- *education organisation* is used interchangeably with *Cardiff University and the University*; and
- *employer* is used interchangeably with *placement provider*.

⁵ For example, a National Software Academy project.

⁶ For example, programmes leading to qualification as a health care professional.

⁷ This includes a range of activities, from short 35 hour placements through to full-year placements, whether sourced by the student or by the school.

⁸ For example, Student Futures activities (such as the Cardiff Award) and bespoke school activities (such as pro bono advice clinics).

⁹ The University is committed to all students being able to access placement opportunities, and has KPIs focused on ‘50% of undergraduate students undertaking a placement’ and ‘20% of home undergraduates undertaking at least 2 weeks’ international mobility’.

SECTION 2: Guiding Principles

The QAA's advice and guidance on [Work-based Learning](#) emphasises that, where a placement contributes to a credit-bearing award, the University “*must have the responsibility for setting and maintaining oversight of quality and standards*”.¹⁰

Our guiding principles are, therefore, designed to ensure that the Expectations, Core and Common practices for both standards and quality are met in relation to any placement that counts towards credit. However, it is acknowledged that extra-curricular placements are also essential in enabling the University to meet its strategic commitment that all students will be offered the opportunity to undertake a work placement if they so wish. Any placement supported by the University should provide an opportunity to develop knowledge, skills and attributes in an inclusive, safe and supported environment. Therefore, where relevant, the guiding principles apply equally to extra-curricular placements supported by the University.

The appropriate level of scrutiny and review must be given to placement activity; that is, sufficient scrutiny to be consistent with our commitment to uphold the highest academic standards and provide safe placement provision, which supports an excellent student experience, whilst ensuring that processes do not operate as a barrier to our strategic commitment through being overly bureaucratic and unwieldy. The correct level of scrutiny is achieved by operating processes for approval and management that are proportionate to the assessed risk of the placement provision.

Given the wide range of placement provision available, it would not be appropriate to devise a single process for the management of all placements supported by the University. Instead, the Policy outlines guiding principles for staff relating to the key aspects of placement activity, namely:

1. developing modules/programmes that include placement-learning;
2. ensuring placement opportunities are inclusive and supported;
3. approving placements and ensuring placements are safe;
4. monitoring, evaluating and reviewing placements.

The decision-making processes within this policy are designed in relation to a guiding principle of subsidiarity, which aids the efficient process of University business whilst ensuring commensurate rigour and scrutiny. It allows the University to effectively discharge its responsibilities under the [revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) and under [consumer protection law](#).

For proposals including placement provision, a key consideration when approving the activity is whether collaboration with a partner poses a risk to the University's academic standards and student experience, and by implication the reputation of the University. The need to protect these is of paramount importance and must be the primary consideration in the evaluation of the benefits of any form of collaboration.

¹⁰ *Work-based Learning Advice and Guidance* (QAA, November 2018) (p.6).

Overarching principles of programme approval

Stage 1 Strategic Approval

Strategic Approval for new programmes is taken at University level and addresses the key question, '**In principle, do we want to do this, and does it align with institutional priorities outlined in [the Way Forward 2018-2023: Recast COVID-19?](#)**' Answering this question also involves moving forward on plans to enhance our online and blended offering. New online provision will be considered for potential new revenue streams, underpinned by a University-level learning technology service. Careful consideration will be given to the proposed partner Institution, market intelligence, business viability including costs and tuition fee income and risks (including reputational risks). A key consideration will also be staff resource to support students sourcing/undertaking placement activities.

Colleges will only put forward key proposals for new programmes to the Stage 1 University panel that meet the institutional priorities outlined in [the Way Forward 2018-2023: Recast COVID-19](#) highlighting how the proposal meets the criteria set out by the Recruitment and Admissions Strategy Group.

Each proposal will be considered at set meetings per year (normally quarterly), which will align with the timescales in Section 3 of the [Programme Development Policy](#). Each proposal will take into account institutional priorities, the resource needed from the School to commit to the development phase and the support required from CESI. Detailed timescales for the development phase will need to be outlined by the School, including the academic sponsor who will be responsible for ensuring timescales are met. All proposals will need to take into consideration the timescales identified in the [Programme Development Policy](#) to maximise recruitment opportunities.

Stage 2 Programme Development Phase

There is an expectation that all proposals progressing from Stage 1 Strategic approval will engage with workshops offered through the CESI including the [Digital Learning Framework](#). Workshops will cover digital education, curriculum design and delivery, assessment and re-assessment opportunities, the student experience and learning resources.

There is an expectation that all programmes will follow the Principles for [Programme Structure, Design and Delivery](#) and will incorporate the principles outlined in the [Welsh Language Strategy](#), [Digital Learning Framework](#) and the [assessment and feedback commitments](#). All proposals will be expected to include the [module threshold checklist](#) to ensure a core level of consistency in students' educational experience,

when there will be a much greater emphasis on digital elements of their programme.

It is envisaged that more time invested during the programme development phase will increase high quality, innovative, programmes being put forward for academic approval to the Programme and Partner Standing Panel thus minimising conditions.

Stage 3 **Academic Approval**

This stage asks the question **‘is this academically robust and does it fulfil the basic structure, digital education and curriculum and assessment principles expected for all Cardiff programmes?’** It also involves consideration of curriculum design and the proposed learning outcomes linked to the placement learning; assessment design and opportunities for re-assessment; the student experience, including the proposed schedule of contact with the student and the placement provider when on placement; induction/briefing pre- and post-placement and the monitoring arrangements for the placement.

All proposals put forward for consideration to the Programme and Partner Standing Panel must show how they have engaged with the workshops provided through the CESI including [the Digital Learning Framework](#) to ensure they meet the principles of [programme structure, design and delivery](#).

The Panel will look to ensure that all new programmes:

- incorporate the principles outlined in the Digital Learning Framework including the [module threshold checklist](#).
- incorporate the principles outlined in the [assessment and feedback principles](#).
- ensure there is appropriate core/required curriculum to uphold the standards of each academic award.
- ensure that any Profession, Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements have been included.
- have appropriate mechanisms and support structures in place to protect the student experience; and
- comply with external benchmarks and quality and standards frameworks.

Student Membership on the panel is critical to gaining insight into student views on the proposal and identifying if any additional modifications are needed.

It is anticipated that engagement with the support available through the programme development phase will minimise the need for additional

conditions/recommendations to be made before recommending for formal **University approval** by ASQC.

Our obligations under Consumer Law prevent us from advertising any programme(s) until formal ASQC approval is granted to ensure the accuracy of information available to students and applicants.

Before students commence any placement, each placement provider must be appropriately risk assessed by the School (see Section 5: Approving placements and assessing risk).

SECTION 3: Developing placement modules/programmes

Guiding Principles

Where a placement counts towards credit, the relevant course provision should:

- be “*designed and developed in partnership with employers, students and other stakeholders (as appropriate) and contain learning outcomes that are relevant to work objectives*”;¹¹ and
- “*enable students to apply and integrate areas of subject and professional knowledge, skills and behaviour to enable them to meet course learning outcomes*”.¹²

In addition, opportunities for placement learning must be inclusive (see Section 4: Ensuring placements are inclusive).

Designing placement provision

As with any credit-bearing activity, placement provision requires defined and relevant learning outcomes that are aligned to a clear assessment strategy. Therefore, the following QAA advice and guidance is likely to be relevant when designing placement provision:

- [Course Design and Development](#)
- [Learning and Teaching](#)
- [Assessment](#)

In addition, recognising the unique nature of placement learning, the QAA suggests that the following questions should be asked at the design stage:¹³

- How have you integrated placement learning into the curriculum and how is it assessed?
- Placement learning can involve learning through work, learning for work and learning at work. How does your course align with these three ways of considering placement learning? How does your assessment strategy relate to this?
- How do you ensure that the placement learning is in line with PSRB regulations to ensure that any required accreditation can be successfully granted?
- What are your arrangements for both summative and formative assessment and how is this monitored?
- Where is your course on the work-based learning continuum and how does that relate to your assessment strategy?

¹¹ *Work-based Learning Advice and Guidance* – Principle 1 (QAA, November 2018) (p.4).

¹² *Work-based Learning Advice and Guidance* – Principle 6 (QAA, November 2018) (p.5).

¹³ *Work-based Learning Advice and Guidance* (QAA, November 2018) (pp.8 & 10).

Where it is proposed that summative assessment is to be delivered/marked by the placement provider, then consideration must be given to the arrangements necessary to quality assure the assessment and feedback process, including ensuring reliability and equivalence as between providers.

University approval processes

The approval process required to introduce credit bearing placement provision will vary depending upon whether the proposal is for a variation of an existing programme or the creation of a new programme.

Where placement provision is being introduced as part of a **new programme**, the procedure outlined in Section 2 should be followed.

The introduction of a **placement-based module (up to 40 credits)** is likely to be classed as a Board of Studies level change and can be approved at school-level, by the relevant Board of Studies and the School Board. In deciding whether to approve such a change, consideration must be given to the following:

- the academic rationale and justification for making the change (*e.g. pedagogical considerations, impact on skills development/student employability*);
- any effect on programme-level learning outcomes;
- any effect on other modules within or external to the School, or relevant Joint Honours provision;
- any additional resources needed as a result of the change (*e.g. academic and professional services staff required for sourcing and co-ordinating placements and undertaking visits, anticipated input from the Student Futures Team*);¹⁴
- evidence from student consultation;
- whether the change raises any issues in relation to the University's responsibilities under consumer protection law (*e.g. to comply with Competition and Markets Authority guidance all published material will need to ensure that the nature and availability of the provision is clear*).

The addition of a **placement year** to an existing programme, usually introducing 120 credits (i.e. a full academic year) of placement learning into an existing 360 credit programme and contributing 10% of the overall degree classification, requires University level approval. Although inclusion of a placement year creates a separate programme of study (as the placement variant will be reflected in the programme title¹⁵), the introduction of a full-year placement into an existing programme of study does not require University level Strategic Approval or the same documentation as a new programme or a major change.

¹⁴ Additional resourcing will usually require strategic sign off by the relevant College.

¹⁵ ASQC's guidance on nomenclature for recognising placement learning notes that the formula of 'core programme name' plus the suffix 'with a Professional Placement Year' or 'with a Year in Industry' or 'With a Placement Year Abroad' should be used (e.g. LLB Law with a Professional Placement Year).

The approval process for introducing 120 credits of placement learning into an existing programme, contributing 10% of the overall degree classification, has three stages, and the general principles applied at each stage are summarised below. It is important that the relevant Board of Studies and the School Board are included in the discussions regarding the proposal before it is submitted to the College as part of the Stage 1 Approval process.

Stage 1 Strategic Approval

Strategic Approval is taken at College-level and addresses the key question: **'In principle, do we want to do this?'**. Answering this question involves consideration of: strategic and business viability issues, including costs/tuition fee income and risks (including reputational risks); student numbers; and practical and academic considerations. A key consideration will be staff resource to support students sourcing/undertaking placement activities.

Stage 2 Programme Development Phase

This stage involves development of your placement year programme. You will need to consider the guidance on developing placement programmes and requirements detailed in this policy.

It is envisaged that more time invested during the programme development phase will increase high quality, innovative, programmes being put forward for academic approval to the Programme and Partner Standing Panel thus minimising conditions.

Stage 3 Academic Approval

This stage asks the question: **'Is this academically robust?'** It involves the Programme and Partner Standing Panel consideration of: curriculum design and the proposed learning outcomes linked to the placement learning; assessment design and opportunities for re-assessment; the student experience, including the proposed schedule of contact with the student and the placement provider when on placement; induction/briefing pre- and post-placement and the monitoring arrangements for the placement.

It is anticipated that engagement with the support available through the programme development phase will minimise the need for additional conditions/recommendations to be made before recommending for formal **University approval** by ASQC.

Once the placement provision has been approved by ASQC, it can be advertised (if appropriate). Before students commence any placement, each placement provider must be appropriately risk assessed by the school (see Section 5: Approving placements and assessing risk).

Careful consideration will be needed to ascertain both the timing and the resource needed to undertake the process. The timescales identified in Section 3 of the [Programme Development Policy](#) will remain applicable.

Full details of the required documentation for each stage of the process are available from your College Quality Officer.

Additional resources

Further support, advice and guidance in relation to the University's approval processes is available from the relevant College Quality Officer at:
Quality@Cardiff.ac.uk.

The Student Futures Team can provide input into module/programme design, including sourcing and preparing for placement and employer liaison:
careers@cardiff.ac.uk.

Support in relation to opportunities for international mobility is available from the Global Opportunities Centre: go@cardiff.ac.uk.

SECTION 4: Ensuring placements are inclusive

Guiding Principle

To ensure that all students can access placement opportunities it is essential that *“education organisations and employers acknowledge individuals have unique needs within the education organisation and in the workplace, and collaborate to ensure opportunities are inclusive, safe and supported”*.¹⁶

The QAA notes that ensuring that placement provision is flexible and enables all students to access opportunities is essential, and that the following question should always be asked at the design stage:¹⁷

- How do you ensure that work-based learning is inclusive (ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made for those with disabilities)?

In addition, as ensuring that placement provision is inclusive may include reasonable adjustments to procedures, activities and physical environments, the advice and guidance on [Enabling Student Achievement](#) may also be relevant.

The University’s commitment and legislative background

Cardiff University is committed to supporting, developing and promoting equality and diversity in all our practices and activities. The University aims to establish an inclusive culture free from discrimination and based upon the values of dignity, courtesy and respect. Every person has the right to be treated in accordance with these values.

These principles are outlined in more detail in the University’s [Equality and Diversity Policy](#), which is itself underpinned by UK legislation. Under the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful. The protected characteristics under the Act are:

- age,
- disability,
- gender reassignment,
- marriage and civil partnership,
- pregnancy and maternity,
- race,
- religion or belief (including lack of belief),
- sex and sexual orientation.

Students are protected from discrimination by placement providers in the UK by the provisions of the Equality Act, whether they are in paid or unpaid positions. This also includes a specific obligation for placement providers to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled students. The nature of these adjustments may vary depending on the resource capacity of each provider. The University’s [Disability and](#)

¹⁶ *Work-based Learning Advice and Guidance – Principle 8* (QAA, November 2018) (p.5).

¹⁷ *Work-based Learning Advice and Guidance* (QAA, November 2018) (p.8).

[Dyslexia Service](#) can assist employers by ensuring that they are aware of their obligations and by providing good practice guidance and support.

Student declaration processes

The University is required to ensure that students with protected characteristics are not discriminated against in relation to placement provision, and must also ensure that reasonable adjustments are made in order for disabled students to be able to complete any placement requirements within their programme of study. For reasonable adjustments to be made, students must be given the opportunity to formally disclose their disability (if they have not already done so) prior to the allocation of a placement.

Where a student identifies a condition or circumstance that may impact upon their ability to complete a placement safely, or that may require a reasonable adjustment, the school should discuss the position with the student. If the information provided by the student appears likely to impact upon the placement, the student must be informed that the placement cannot proceed until the placement provider has been notified of the relevant information and consideration given to how any additional risk can be managed. If the student refuses to consent to the information being disclosed, then the placement cannot proceed. Advice and guidance regarding appropriate support and adjustments can be obtained from the [Disability & Dyslexia Service](#).

Checking employer awareness and adherence to principles of inclusion

Placement providers should be asked to confirm that they have processes in place which promote and respect the principles of inclusion.

Where the school and the placement provider work together to recruit/allocate students to placement opportunities, the school must ensure that the selection processes employed are open and fair. Similarly, where the school uses the services of an external organisation to source and/or manage placements, the school must ensure that the organisation adheres to appropriate equality and diversity procedures.

Where the student has arranged their own placement, appropriate confirmation should be obtained before the placement is approved by the school.

Where a provider appears to be unfamiliar with the legislative requirements, it is suggested that they are directed to the University's [Equality and Diversity Policy](#) and to information available on the ACAS website regarding [Equality and Discrimination](#) and accommodating [Reasonable adjustments in the workplace](#).

Additional resources

The GO Wales Team (within Student Futures) can help source work shadowing opportunities, work tasters and up to six weeks paid work placements for students who have faced barriers in accessing higher education or work experience:

Gowales@cardiff.ac.uk

SECTION 5: Approving placements and assessing risk

Guiding Principles

As placement opportunities are partnerships, it is essential that they are “*underpinned by formal agreements between education organisations, employers and students*”, which set out the “*respective roles, responsibilities and expectations*” of each of the parties.¹⁸

In addition, “*appropriate training and support*” should be provided where required.¹⁹

The QAA suggests that a risk-based approach should be adopted for developing the activities required and assigning areas of responsibility, with the following questions being key:²⁰

- What measures do you take to adequately assess the risks associated with placement learning activities?
- What types of placement learning do your students engage with and do you have a range of agreement templates to guide discussions with students and employers?
- How do you ensure that students and employers understand their own, and others’, roles and responsibilities for the different aspects of the work-based learning and assessment that is required?
- How have you prepared the student for learning in the workplace?
- What advice and guidance is available for students who are going to be involved in work-based learning?

In addition, as placement provision involves partnership working, the advice and guidance on [Partnerships](#) may also be relevant.

University-sourced placements

Where the University sources placements, which are integrated within a programme of study, a formal agreement should be in place between the university and the provider clarifying the expectations and obligations of each party. Such agreements should also reflect any PSRB requirements.

Clinical placements will usually be delivered under service-level agreements (or equivalents), which outline the specific operational, financial and supervisory arrangements for the placements. The agreement should set out:

- the parties to the agreement;
- the responsibilities of each party including risk assessments and insurance liabilities;
- numbers of students involved including a maximum number placed within each clinical department;

¹⁸ *Work-based Learning Advice and Guidance* – Principles 3 and 7 (QAA, November 2018) (pp.4 & 5).

¹⁹ *Work-based Learning Advice and Guidance* – Principle 7 (QAA, November 2018) (p.5).

²⁰ *Work-based Learning Advice and Guidance* (QAA, November 2018) (pp.7 - 9).

- how students will be assessed and by whom;
- arrangements for giving feedback including timeliness and format;
- evaluation mechanisms for the placement;
- any financial arrangements;
- the duration of the agreement (agreements will usually be renewed every 12 months).

Where the University sources placement opportunities that are not integrated within a programme of study (e.g. work experience opportunities available via the Student Futures Team), the placement should still be subject to a proportionate risk assessment to ensure that the provider complies with legislative requirements.

Student-sourced placements

Where a student sources a placement, which is then integrated within a programme of study, the school must ensure that:

- the placement will allow the intended learning outcomes to be achieved;
- a proportionate risk assessment is undertaken to ensure that the provider complies with legislative requirements and that the placement is otherwise safe.

Before the student embarks on the placement a written agreement setting out the nature of the placement and the respective roles and responsibilities of the University, provider and student should be in place.

Preparation for placement

All students must be provided with briefing information by the school prior to commencing any placement activity. Briefing information should include:

- a placement/clinical practice handbook;
- discussion of planned learning activities, intended learning outcomes and how they will be assessed, and the opportunities for re-assessment;
- the risk assessment and any recommendations regarding health, safety, welfare and personal insurance cover for the student;
- the student's responsibilities, rights and entitlements in the placement setting;
- language and cultural considerations (for international placements);
- accommodation arrangements (where relevant);
- contact information - both for the University and the placement provider, and also for any other relevant local organisations in the placement setting;
- student support arrangements including agreed method and schedule of contact with the school throughout the placement, and the additional support provided by the [Students' Union](#);
- any specific needs of the individual student (e.g. disability, health, dietary or religious) and how these will be accommodated within the placement setting;

- the process for raising concerns whilst on placement with both the school and the placement provider, including, for students on clinical-based placements, information regarding escalating concerns relating to fitness to practise requirements;
- confirmation regarding the nature of the relationship between the student and the provider (e.g. for short unpaid placements the student is likely to be classed as a visitor, whereas for longer paid placements the student is likely to be an employee, and subject to a contract of employment, with the associated entitlements and responsibilities).

International students

Generally, if students require a Tier 4 visa to study in the UK, and their programme includes a placement, then they must pursue the full-time variant of the programme. Where an international student is studying part-time (or via distance learning), and the programme includes placement learning, then immigration advice on the leave to remain options available should be sought from International Student Support (email: iss@cardiff.ac.uk).

Additional resources

Further information about approving placements and assessing risk (including insurance cover) is available in the University's [Guidance on risk assessment of placement provision](#).

Information about funding for [UK placements](#) and [Year abroad funding](#) is available from the University's Advice and Money Team: adviceandmoney@cardiff.ac.uk.

SECTION 6: Monitoring and evaluating placements

Guiding Principle

As the ability to deliver placement learning is contingent upon the opportunities made available by providers, it is essential that, in addition to obtaining feedback from students, placement provision should be *“monitored, evaluated and reviewed in partnership with employers”*.²¹

Students undertaking placement learning need to have equitable opportunities to succeed. Therefore, systematic processes for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing placement provision should be in place. The QAA notes that, where placement learning is undertaken, *“the monitoring and evaluation processes will go beyond the standard mechanisms applied within the education organisation”*,²² with the following issues requiring consideration:

- How do you maintain contact with the student in the workplace and how do you ensure that the student is fully supported in accordance with your agreement with the employer?
- What are your procedures for visiting the student in the workplace and how is this communicated to the student and the employer?
- What measures are in place for the student, the employer or the education organisation to raise complaints or concerns? How is this communicated?
- What safeguards do you have in place for the student should the work-based learning agreement not be fulfilled?
- What measures do you have in place for seeking feedback on work-based learning?
- How do you include employers and other stakeholders in the feedback that you collect?
- How do you use feedback, both qualitative and quantitative, to evaluate work-based learning and how do you action any relevant points that arise?
- What measures do you take to communicate your actions to those involved in work-based learning?
- How do you effectively monitor and evaluate your approach to work-based learning throughout the duration of the course?
- What do you do to communicate the outcomes from your monitoring and evaluation to all those involved in work-based learning?

In addition, the advice and guidance on [Monitoring and Evaluation](#) provides general information relating to the theme.

Responsibility for monitoring students undertaking placements

The Head of School or their nominee (e.g. programme/module leader) must ensure that the management of any placement adheres to the principles set out in the Policy. Where placement opportunities are available for joint honours students, the

²¹ *Work-based Learning Advice and Guidance – Principle 9* (QAA, November 2018) (p.5).

²² *Work-based Learning Advice and Guidance* (QAA, November 2018) (p.12).

home school must ensure that arrangements are in place to meet the monitoring and evaluation principles.

All students should be assigned to a member of staff, who will be their primary point of contact at the University throughout the placement. This placement supervisor may be a member of academic or professional services staff, but the assigned person should have appropriate experience of placement provision and student support.

In addition, students remain registered as students of the University and are able to access support via the University. Therefore, students should also be allocated a personal tutor with whom the student can liaise in the event that they require pastoral support, particularly in respect of non-placement related issues. Where an academic member of staff is acting as the placement supervisor, it is permissible for that person to also be assigned as the student's personal tutor.

If the assigned placement supervisor and/or personal tutor changes during the period of the placement, the student must be contacted immediately and advised who will be undertaking the responsibilities for the remainder of the placement. Where a change is made to the placement supervisor, the placement provider should also be notified.

Using external placement agencies

If external agencies are used to source and/or support placement activities, it is essential that they have a clear understanding of all aspects of the required provision, including the academic learning outcomes, any PSRB requirements and any specific student needs. Functions, such as organising placements, may be delegated but universities cannot delegate their legal responsibilities. As examples, it remains the duty of the University to ensure that an appropriate risk assessment of the placement has taken place, or that reasonable adjustments are in place for disabled students. The need for consistency of practice and a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities is critical when commissioning external agencies and, therefore, any arrangement with an external agency must be in the form of a written contract that fully complies with the provisions of the Policy.

School register of placement activities

Schools must maintain a register of all placement activities. This should include the following information for each placement:

- the specific area within the school associated with the placement activity (e.g. module/programme/research team);
- the designated placement supervisor within the school;
- the nature of the placement (e.g. location(s), types of activities, details of any other organisation involved);
- name and contact details for the nominated supervisor at the host organisation;

- the formal agreement with the placement provider;
- list of names and ID numbers for all students undertaking the placement;
- statement of any reasonable adjustments agreed with the placement provider; and
- where applicable, written consent from students to disability disclosure.

Where specific risks have been identified as part of the risk assessment process, it is expected that the school will both log the risks and monitor them, in conjunction with the student and the placement provider, as part of the placement management process.

Visiting students during placement

Short placements

Modules involving short placements will usually be undertaken in conjunction with other taught modules, with the student typically spending between 35 and 70 hours on placement.

Early contact must be established to ensure students are supported should there be any issues or difficulties that may impact upon them achieving the learning outcomes for the module, and to ensure that appropriate induction has taken place. Given the variety of modular provision that exists (from part-day release through to full weeks spent with the provider), schools will need to exercise discretion regarding what constitutes an appropriate point of early contact for the module. However, given the short duration of the placement activity, contact should usually be made by no later than the second session/day of the placement. It will normally be appropriate for contact to be via email, with telephone follow-up in the event that the student fails to respond.

Semester and year-long placements

For semester and year-long placements, schools must assess the feasibility of the placement supervisor undertaking a visit to each student, particularly if the placement is in the UK. If it is not possible to visit each student individually, consideration should be given to:

- collaborative visits (i.e. sharing visiting responsibilities with other schools who have students on placement in the same location/region);
- making a visit to a central 'base' to which a number of students can travel within a day;
- visiting established placement providers on a regular cycle;
- using an external agency.

Where visits cannot be undertaken, it is especially important to develop appropriate channels of communication for students during their placements. The method and schedule should be explained to the students before the placement commences, with the first contact taking place within the first two weeks to ensure that an appropriate induction has taken place and that the student has transitioned into the

placement environment. The minimum expectation for student contact is twice per semester via video call and/or telephone with email follow up where appropriate. Higher risk placements must be monitored every month with the student and the placement provider.

Complaints about placements

All students must be aware of the process for raising concerns whilst on placement with both the school and the placement provider, including, for students on clinical-based placements, information regarding escalating concerns relating to fitness to practise requirements.

There should also be clearly scheduled points of contact and lines of communication between the school and the placement provider. This should include opportunities for the placement provider to:

- raise concerns or complaints about any aspect of the placement, including an individual student's performance or conduct;
- make suggestions to the University about how the placement activity could be improved.

All communication must be logged on the student's file and reviewed at the end of the placement. The information may inform future decisions on the appropriateness of placing with the provider.

The QAAs advice and guidance on [Concerns Complaints and Appeals](#) provides additional information relating to this theme.

Early termination of placements

The nature of placement learning means that there is always a risk that a placement may terminate early, often due to circumstances outside of the parties' control. Schools must have clear processes in place to mitigate such incidents, such as options to continue the placement with an alternative provider or alternative study options to fulfil the learning outcomes.

Returning from placement

Where students have undertaken longer placements (semester or full-year), it is important that they are supported in their transition back to the University to resume their taught programme. This may be done on a one-to-one basis or via a group de-briefing session if there are a number of students returning at the same time. Whilst scheduled contact throughout the placement would alert schools to any immediate issues or concerns, a de-briefing session can highlight areas of good practice that can be shared and reported through the Annual Review and Enhancement process.

Evaluating placement activities

Schools must ensure that there is a clear, effective and confidential way for students to provide feedback about their placement to protect and enhance the quality of the student experience. Feedback should be monitored, evaluated and summarised in an annual report to the Board of Studies, and to the University, via the Annual Review and Enhancement Process. The report should include information regarding:

- student numbers and achievements on placement;
- any impact of increased student numbers on the resources available to support students;
- feedback from all stakeholders;
- reflection on any changes introduced in placement management, plus comments on any proposed changes to improve placement activity in future years;
- any other comments, including any aspects of good practice in placement activity that were considered to be particularly effective.

The Academic Standards and Quality Committee will maintain an institutional oversight of monitoring and reporting of placement activity through the Annual Review and Enhancement process.

SECTION 7: Postgraduate Research Students

A wide range of placement activities are undertaken by research students, as placements can enhance research skills and provide valuable workplace experience, which supports future career choices.

This Section summarises the key considerations that apply to the organisation and management of these activities.

Types of placement activity

Placement activities for research students may be linked to their PhD project or may be independent activities designed to boost employability. The range of placement activities detailed in Table 1 below includes:

- fieldwork/data collection (away from the University);
- external study leave (placement related to PhD project);
- internship/policy placement that forms part of funded doctoral programme;
- internship/policy placement that is not part of funded doctoral programme;
- work experience.

Approving a placement

Any research student considering a placement must discuss it with their supervisor before arranging the placement. The University's responsibilities when approving a period of placement learning by a research student vary depending upon whether the placement will be undertaken as part of the student's programme.

Where the placement is being undertaken as part of the student's programme, the general approach set out in Section 5 (*Approving placements and assessing risk*) applies. Therefore, the University will need to ensure that a risk assessment is undertaken, and, where the placement involves an external provider, that a placement agreement setting out the responsibilities of the University, the student and the host is in place.

Where the placement will not form part of the student's programme, the student will usually be required to apply for an interruption of study for the period of the placement. In these circumstances, the University's role is limited to processing the interruption of study application.

Funding implications

Some placement opportunities are funded, and the implications of undertaking a funded placement need to be considered prior to the placement arrangements being finalised.

Fieldwork/data collection away from the University will not usually have any implications for the student's funding, as the work will be integral to the programme of study, and the student will not receive any separate payment for undertaking the work.

Where the student is funded, any placement activity will require the agreement of the funder and, where approved, will usually result in the student's programme of study being extended by the period of the placement. The student will continue to receive their stipend (and their fees are paid) throughout the placement period.

Where the student is not funded, or where the placement is being undertaken as a development opportunity that is not part of the student's programme of study, then any payment will be a private matter between the student and the host organisation, as the placement will usually be undertaken as a period of interruption of study. However, taking interruption of study may have implications for the student's doctoral loan, as payments are likely to be suspended for the period of interruption. Therefore, students should take advice regarding the funding implications of undertaking a placement before formally committing to the placement.

Student Route (formerly Tier 4) visa holders are not permitted to take an interruption of study to undertake a placement, and further guidance regarding the availability of interruption of study is contained in the University's [Interruption of Study and Extension to Time Limit Policy and Procedure \(Research Students\)](#).

Monitoring and evaluation

Where a placement is being undertaken as part of the student's programme, the general approach set out in Section 6 (*Monitoring and evaluating placements*) applies. Therefore, arrangements should be in place for ongoing supervision and pastoral support, and consistent with the [policy on research supervision](#) (including collaborative supervision where relevant).

Additionally, students should be provided with an opportunity to provide an evaluation of their placement, and completion of a placement evaluation may be a requirement where the placement is undertaken as part of a funded doctoral programme.

Particularly where the placement does not form part of the student's programme of study, appropriate support must be available to enable the student to transition back to their research project.

Summary

The [UKRI Training Grant Guidance](#) provides a useful summary of the approach that should be taken to placement activities for research students, noting:

“Work Placements Students may undertake a work placement or internship where this is either directly related to the Student’s training, or provides valuable transferable skills, provided this is well justified and approved in advance by their Supervisor and Research Organisation.

The placement may be an integral part of the award, in which case a suspension or an extension of the Student’s funded period is not required. In other cases, there may be a case for the award to be extended. However if a placement is not directly part of their doctorate programme or the Student is receiving a payment for the placement, then the Studentship should be suspended.”

Table 1 summarises the characteristics and key requirements associated with each of the main placement activities undertaken by research students, and further information and guidance can be obtained from Registry (PGR Quality and Operations) pgr@cardiff.ac.uk.

Table 1

| Activity | Characteristics | Examples | Requirements |
|--|--|---|--|
| Fieldwork/data collection (undertaken away from the University) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Period(s) of time away from CU²³ • Part of PhD, integral to Research Plan • Not formally hosted by another organisation • Not collaborative • Could be based in UK or overseas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fieldwork (e.g. environmental science, archaeology, engineering etc.) • Gathering data from participants, companies/organisations; ethnographic work, participant observation (e.g. social sciences) • Access to archives, libraries, museums for data collection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate risk assessment • Provision for supervision/monitoring to continue and appropriate evaluation • Travel insurance if overseas |
| External study leave (placement related to PhD project) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Period(s) of time away from CU • Part of PhD, integral to Research Plan • Undertaking planned PhD work in another research environment • Collaborative with another (host) organisation • Could be based in UK or overseas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CASE partner (or comparable) • Time in another lab/HEI/research organisation/industry etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate risk assessment • Provision for supervision/monitoring to continue and appropriate evaluation • CASE partner agreement or collaborative supervision agreement • Induction at partner organisation • Travel insurance if overseas |
| Internship/policy placement that forms part of funded doctoral programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development opportunity, commensurate with D-level aims • Time out of PhD project, but considered part of the programme • Collaborative with another (host) organisation • Could be based in UK or overseas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Government • UKRI POST scheme • UKRI Globalink exchange scheme • DTP/CDT requirements or opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate risk assessment • Approval of placement/internship (consideration of learning activity) • Placement agreement • Adjustment to monitoring schedule • Appropriate evaluation • Travel insurance if overseas |
| Internship/policy placement that is <u>not</u> part of funded doctoral programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development opportunity, commensurate with D-level aims • Separate from programme; interruption of study required • Could be based in UK or overseas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student self-organised activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interruption of study application • Approval of placement limited to review of learning activity as part of interruption of study |
| Work experience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development opportunity, commensurate with D-level aims • Separate from programme; interruption of study required • Often 6 or 12 months • Could be based in UK or overseas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RA/teaching position - at CU/other HEI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interruption of study application • Approval of placement limited to review of learning activity as part of interruption of study |

²³ Any type of data collection that involves travel or activities away from the University. High-risk (e.g. online research into criminal organisations) or emotionally demanding data collection undertaken locally and/or online is not included, but will require appropriate risk assessment and support.