



University of the Highlands and Islands

Placement and Externally Supported Learning Policy (Tertiary)

POL160

Lead Officer (Post):	Head of Careers and Employability
Responsible Office/ Department:	Careers and Employability Centre
Responsible Committee:	Finance and General Purposes Committee
Review Officer (Post):	Head of Careers and Employability
Date policy approved:	24/02/2022
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Date policy due for review:	24/02/2024
Date of Equality Impact Assessment:	TBC
Date of Privacy Impact Assessment:	Not required

Accessible versions of this policy are available upon request. Please contact the Governance Team on 01463 279000.

Policy Summary

Overview	<p>The university is committed to providing placement and externally supported learning opportunities for students to consolidate and complement their academic learning. View all activity definitions. In addition, it is committed to providing opportunities to develop work-related skills, consider career pathways, and engage in personal and professional development planning.</p> <p>This policy provides a quality and legislative framework for identifying, running, or participating in the delivery of placement or externally supported learning. It focuses on management of the tripartite relationship between the student, the academic partner/university, and the third party. The university has a legislative and quality responsibility for the management and delivery of placement and externally supported learning. This includes proportionate risk assessment, consideration of insurance liability and provisions, and potential reputational risk to the university if approved policy and process is not adhered to.</p>
Purpose	<p>The policy will support staff in the development, coordination, and management of activity, including where appropriate adequate risk assessment procedures, and consideration of issues of insurance liability, legal responsibility, and reputational risk.</p>
Scope	<p>Application of this policy is mandatory for all activity which is tripartite in nature and consists of the following support elements: facilitation, organisation, coordination, monitoring or assessment of placement or externally supported learning opportunity by the university, academic partner (AP) or any member of staff. Examples of the application of support elements are available within the detailed staff guidance which accompanies this policy.</p> <p>The policy does not apply to externally supported learning opportunities which are initiated and organised by the student, and as such are not subject to the support elements identified above. In these circumstances legislative and quality matters will not be the responsibility of the university or APs.</p>
Consultation	<p>This policy has been created following extensive consultation with several specialists across the university partnership. These include but are not exclusive to subject network leaders; programme and curriculum leads at FE and HE levels; health and safety practitioners; finance, insurance, and legal practitioners; and placement/externally supported learning managers and coordinators. A strategic working group, with sub-consultation groups, was in place throughout the process.</p>
Implementation and Monitoring	<p>Implementation: This renewed and revised tertiary policy will be widely communicated to all academic partners when finalised via staff communication channels, subject network committees, curriculum leads, and staff drop-in sessions. The Careers and Employability Centre (CEC) will support these activities and provide ongoing support.</p>

	<p>Monitoring: Monitoring of policy compliance will be undertaken by the CEC. This will involve mid-semester checks on all programmes, as detailed under point 8.5.2 in this document. All required paperwork and evidence of compliance is uploaded to a central, secure SharePoint area managed by the CEC. This allows for simplified tracking of activity via a single point of paperwork storage for each module undertaking placement or externally supported learning activity.</p> <p>GDPR: For data retention purposes, staff will be asked to remove documentation that features personal data and is no longer required from the secure, central SharePoint repository, at the end of each academic year. Data will be managed in line with the University partnership retention and disposal policy.docx.</p>
Risk Implications	<p>The risk implications of this policy relate to the following aspects of placement or externally supported learning activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health, safety, and welfare of students. • Risks arising from health and safety related liabilities. • Reputational risk to the institution of a failure to provide a learning and development experience in a workplace environment, which meets the expectations of students and employers.
Link with Strategy	<p>This policy is closely linked to the University's Strategic Plan and Outcome Agreement in supporting the delivery of high quality curriculum and world-class research, whilst providing student opportunities to develop valuable skills and engage with employers and the communities in which we live and work, for mutual benefit.</p>
Impact Assessment	<p>Equality Impact Assessment: Currently being finalised.</p>
	<p>Privacy Impact Assessment: Deemed not necessary after completion of DPIA screening form.</p>

1. Policy Statement

The university is committed to the development of placement and externally supported learning opportunities for students as evidenced through its Strategic Plan, and its Scottish Funding Council Outcome Agreement. As such, it recognises the objective of any experience, regardless of length, is to consolidate and complement academic learning, knowledge, and skills, while integrating aspects of personal career planning and development. As this is generally a tripartite relationship involving student, provider, and the university/academic partner, this policy sets out a framework for those involved in developing, running, or participating in, placement activity or externally supported learning.

The policy also addresses the university's legislative and quality responsibility for the management and delivery of placement and other externally supported activity, including where appropriate, adequate risk assessment procedures, and consideration of issues of insurance liability, legal responsibility, and reputational risk.

2. Definitions

All the types of activity described below would fall within policy parameters.

Work experience	Work experience provides short-term opportunities to develop employability skills, professional behaviours and personal attributes while gaining knowledge and insight into working life. Opportunities are usually related to a students' programme of study or future career plans.
Work-based learning	This is an umbrella term for experiences students gain in the workplace/working for an external organisation which are either assessed for academic credit, used to support the achievement of specific units, or to help contextualise learning.
Externally led projects or challenges	These are opportunities for students to develop their skills in the context of a real-world scenario. They can be curricular or co-curricular, and usually require students to work independently or as a team to address a challenge posed by an external organisation and may or may not require the student/s to either visit or be based on the providers premises.
Placement	A period a student spends in the workplace as an assessed component of their studies. The terms 'placement' and 'internship' are interchangeable and as such contain the same features, however it should be noted that their application externally is subject to cultural/sector/organisational norms. The period of placement activity may vary in length dependent on curriculum area and can be undertaken outside term times i.e., during Summer, Easter breaks, etc.
Work shadowing	Shadowing opportunities are generally short term. They allow students to spend time at/with an external provider observing the activities of that organisation/individual and the typical working environment. Students are treated as visitors to the workplace and as such are not paid, will not have a contract with the organisation, and there would be no expectation that the student would contribute to the work of the organisation.

Virtual Placement	A virtual placement is an arrangement that includes the same basic features as other 'in-person' placement activity except that work contributions are undertaken away from the external providers usual work environment. As such students would be expected to complete virtual placement paperwork and the employer will have the same responsibilities towards their home workers as for any other workers.
Volunteering	Volunteering is a form of work experience but is most often used to benefit others. It is not subject to formal employment terms and conditions. It is a period that a student spends unpaid without expectation or promise of compensation for their work, on an activity which may benefit society, the environment, or themselves through developing skills and broader experience. It may be related to completion of an extra-curricular award or may contribute to a programme of study.
Practice Placements	Governed by a formal agreement between the Higher Education Provider and employer, NHS Boards, the General Teaching Council for Scotland and local authorities. These placements are usually undertaken on programmes where qualification leads to licence or registration to practice. Students will often do multiple practice placements as part of their programme of study. NHS placements may take place in-house and within other NHS facilities. Employers, higher education providers and NHS staff may be involved in the assessment of students.
Fieldwork	Any work carried out by the student in locations or at premises not under the managerial control of the university and may include research, exploration, surveying, observation or interviewing in a variety of different settings. Supervised fieldwork is mainly under direct supervision such as taught undergraduate or post graduate courses. However, there may be instances where students are under periods of indirect supervision.
Site visits and event attendance	Educational activities that take place off site offering students first-hand experiences of different environments and organisational cultures that are not available in their normal teaching environment.

3. Purpose

The policy (and accompanying detailed guidance) has been written to ensure:

- Clarity of understanding by each party of their roles and responsibilities.
- Preparation of the student so they understand the risks and can make informed judgements.
- There are processes for raising and resolving problems prior to, during, and at the conclusion of the placement and externally supported learning.
- There are contingency plans in case of any exceptional circumstances.
- Staff who are involved in handling student placements and externally supported learning have guidance and training on policy and the mandatory process that they must follow.

4. Scope

This policy is tertiary. It is mandatory for all members of support and academic staff involved in the development, promotion, or management of activity which is tripartite in nature and consists of the following support elements: facilitation, organisation, coordination, monitoring or assessment of placement or externally supported learning opportunity by the university, academic partner (AP) or any member of staff. Examples of the application of support elements are available within the detailed staff guidance which accompanies this policy.

The policy also applies to senior management of the University and Academic Partners, particularly in relation to devolved responsibilities.

5. Exceptions

The policy does not apply to externally supported learning opportunities which are initiated and organised by the student, and as such are not subject to the support elements identified in the scope of this policy.

In these circumstances legislative and quality matters will not be the responsibility of the university or APs. Examples of student led activity which is not subject to mandatory requirements is available in the detailed staff guidance accompanying this policy.

6. Notification

- Academic Principals
- The University Senior Management Team
- Members of QAEC
- Designated Signatories
- FE and HE Curriculum Teams across the partnership
- Academic Partner Placement Supervisors
- Academic Partner Externally Supported Learning Supervisors

7. Roles and Responsibilities

University Secretary, College Principals, Designated College Signatories, and Placement/ Externally Supported Learning Supervisors or staff arranging the activity, all hold a level of responsibility.

[View full details of roles and responsibilities](#)

8. Procedures

8.1 Management Principles

8.1.1 Participation in any form of placement, externally supported, or fieldwork activity should contribute to the purpose of the overall programme and or/extra-curricular award.

8.1.2 Planning and management of activity should follow a risk based, proportionate approach and adhere to all relevant university policies and procedures.

8.1.3 All activity should be subject to appropriate insurance and indemnity cover. Detailed policy guidance is provided here: [Insurance and Liability](#).

8.1.4 All activity requires a signed tripartite Learning Agreement (TLA) and confirmation of relevant policy requirements in respect of points 8.1.3, 8.1.5, 8.1.6 and 8.1.7 is mandatory. Other requirements as detailed in staff guidance should be included in the TLA as appropriate, for example, PVG checks and measures.

8.1.5 All activity should consider the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Detailed policy guidance is provided here: [Health and Safety](#).

8.1.6 All activity should consider the Equality Act 2010. Detailed policy guidance is provided here: [Equality and Diversity](#).

8.1.7 In the course of developing or taking part in activity, students, staff or employers may have access to confidential or sensitive information concerning individuals, the business of the organisation, or third parties. The university recognises that the correct and lawful treatment of personal data maintains confidence in the organisation and provides for successful operations and the university is committed to a policy of protection the rights and freedoms of individuals with respect to the processing of personal data. The university has adopted a robust [Information Security and Data Protection Policy](#) and all activity must consider the eight principles of the [Data Protection Act 1998](#). Detailed policy guidance on data security and confidentiality is provided here: [GDPR and Intellectual Property](#).

8.1.8 In certain circumstances the host organisation may require as a condition of acceptance that the student assign to them, by way of a contract, their Intellectual Property rights (IPR) in the work they create or develop while on the placement or externally supported learning. Guidance on this area can be found within the [university's IPR policy](#).

8.1.9 Where activity is undertaken through a modular/unit framework, students should be provided with information and documentation as per the regulations set down in the university's [Academic Standards and Quality Regulations](#).

8.1.10 Where activity is subject to accreditation through external awarding bodies, consideration should also be given to any additional specifications or requirements.

8.1.11 Where activity involves working with children or protected adults, account must be taken of the [Protection of Vulnerable Groups \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#). Detailed policy guidance is provided here: [PVG Considerations](#).

8.1.12 Where activity is to take place abroad, account must be taken of cultural considerations, legislation, visa and insurance requirements. Placements or externally supported learning with overseas organisations require particular care, as it will be necessary to consider overseas jurisdiction issues and the requirements of statutory/regulatory authorities in the territory in respect of indemnity and insurance arrangements. Detailed policy guidance is provided here: [Sending Students Abroad](#).

8.1.13 Where activity involves the placement of an international student in the United Kingdom, the university is subject to restrictions placed upon activity as set out by Guidance on application for UK visa as Tier 4 student. Detailed policy guidance is provided here: [Placing international students in the UK](#).

8.1.14 Where additional support and guidance is required, in areas such as, job search, CV and interview preparation, academic staff should seek guidance from, or refer the student to, the university's Careers and Employability Centre.

8.2 Roles and responsibilities (incorporating, staff, students and third parties)

The objective of any work based, placement or externally supported learning experience, regardless of length, is to consolidate and complement academic learning, knowledge, and skills with experience. It generally involves a three-way partnership involving the student, the provider, and the university/AP.

The university has a legislative and quality responsibility for the management and delivery of placement and externally supported learning activity, including where appropriate, adequate risk assessment procedures, and consideration of issues of insurance liability, legal responsibility and reputational risk. It is important to remember that irrespective of who initiates the activity; whether a student makes a speculative application, an employer advertises a scheme or the university/AP sources a project, all parties should be involved in the relationship if it is to become a successful learning opportunity.

[View roles and responsibilities chart here](#)

8.3 Legislative requirements

The university has a duty of care in relation to legislative requirements, when planning and delivering placement and externally supported learning activity.

[View information on all duty of care and legislative requirements](#)

8.4 Quality monitoring

Quality monitoring is undertaken through the compliance monitoring process as detailed above under 8.5.2.

Annual updates will be provided to QAEC as part of enhancement theme quality monitoring processes.

Feedback from Placement or Externally Supported Learning Providers on the 'service delivery' aspect of hosting and managing students is also a vital element of the quality monitoring process.

[View placement and externally supported learning provider process evaluation form](#)

8.5 Monitoring, recording, and reporting processes

8.5.1 Storing of paperwork

All mandatory documentation and paperwork relation to placement and externally supported learning is to be uploaded to the secure, central repository set-up for these purposes. This allows for evidencing policy compliance.

The paperwork require depends on the type of activity being undertaken. More information is available on the [Staff Guidance Site](#).

8.5.2 Compliance checks

The following approach will be used for checking paperwork compliance, in line with the requirements of this policy. This will be undertaken by the Careers and Employability Centre (CEC).

New Programmes

- Full paperwork check required for any programmes who are new to placement or externally supported learning activity.

Programmes with regular and ongoing activity

- Sampling approach where paperwork has proven to be in order in the past.
- Sample 25% of all programmes undertaking placement.
- For those 25% we sample paperwork for 5 student placements or 10% of total cohort undertaking placement (whichever is greater).
- Takes place once a semester (mid-semester) each academic year.

Non-compliant Programmes

- Identification of courses where there have been issues with paperwork and compliance in the past.
- Full check from CEC to ensure compliance with full process.

9. Legislative Framework

- [Health and Safety Act 1974](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Data Protection Act](#)
- [UK Visas and Immigration Policy](#)
- [Protection of Vulnerable Groups \(Scotland\) Act](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 2005](#)

10. Related Policies, Procedures, Guidelines and Other Resources

- [Placement and Externally Support Learning: Staff Guidance Site](#)
- [UK Quality Code for Higher Education: B3, B4, B10](#)
- [QAA Work-Based Learning - Expectations and Practices](#)
- [UK Quality Code. Advice and Guidance: Work-Based Learning 2018](#)
- [ASET* Good Practice Guide for Work based and Placement Learning in Higher Education](#)
- [ASET Good Practice Guide for Health and Safety for Student Placements](#)
- [ASET Good Practice Guide for Supporting Students with Disabilities on Placement](#)
- [Scottish Framework for Safe Practice in Off-site Visits](#)

11. Version Control and Change History

Version	Date	Approved by	Amendment(s)	Author
1	24/02/22	FGPC	Policy approved	FGPC
2				
3				
4				