



Guidance on Student Placement

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this guidance is to provide Schools with advice on the principles to follow to manage the health and safety risks arising from student placement.

It is important to recognise that the statutory liability for the health and safety of a student on placement primarily lies with the Placement Provider. The University is required to do what is reasonably practicable to ensure that students are not placed in a working environment where there are significant risks to their health and safety.

This guidance sets out the actions which will allow the University to fulfil its duties to students under health and safety legislation. It will also enable students to be sufficiently informed whilst on placement of health and safety responsibilities.

The guidance is composed of four sections:

Actions required prior to commencement of placements

Preparation of Placement Students

Actions required during placements

Actions required on completion of placements

1. Actions required prior to commencement of placements

1.1 Identification of placements

All placements, including those sourced by students, must be submitted for assessment by academic staff and be subject to the school's health and safety procedures before placement can be accepted and authorised. Where academic staff assesses a placement proposal as having an unacceptably high level of risk, this proposal should be rejected and an alternative placement sought.

1.2 Generic risk assessments drawn up for course cohorts

Risk assessments for each course cohort (e.g. civil engineering placements, nursing placements, and overseas placements) should be made. Such assessment will help identify any specific requirements which need to be added to the information sent to the placement provider relating to health and safety expectations set by the University.

1.3 Identification of additional potential risks specific to individual placements

Individual placements may present particular risks which should be taken into account when assessing risk levels and appropriate preparation of students.

Examples may include:

- working in countries with high levels of HIV;
- working in noisy environments (quarries, manufacturing);
- working at height (construction sites);
- work with a significant potential for personal attack (psychiatric units);
- working in remote areas.

These assessments may identify aspects of placement preparation which need to be addressed by the School and help determine the level of monitoring which may be required during the placement.

1.4 Health and Safety questionnaire sent to placement provider

A crucial element of the University fulfilling its 'duty of care' for placement students is to gain assurance from each placement provider that there are appropriate safety systems in place and that all reasonably practicable steps will be taken to protect the health and safety of our students whilst on placement. The University requires completion of a Health and Safety checklist where placement organisations provide confirmation of their safety arrangements and agree to provide all necessary health and safety training for our students during their placement.

(see Appendix A)

1.5 Any difficulties with completed questionnaire investigated with placement provider and resolved

The University must be in receipt of the completed questionnaire before a placement is accepted and confirmed. Partially completed questionnaires must not be accepted

and must be followed up with the placement provider to clarify the University's requirements.

Records from each placement provider must be retained by the School.

NB. The questions within the checklist refer to arrangements required by UK Health and Safety legislation and should not pose any difficulty for organisations operating within the UK.

1.6 Confirmation letter to placement provider

The school should provide confirmation of the placement on receipt of the completed Health and Safety checklist.

2. Preparation of Placement Students

2.1 Guidance on sourcing potential suitable placements and the required approval process for placement proposals.

Students sourcing their own placements should be provided with guidance which includes an outline of the University's health and safety requirements and the approval process which is operated by the School. This guidance must make it clear that any placements not approved by the school are not authorised placements and will not be recognised by the University.

(see Appendix B 'Information for Students on the Placement process')

2.2 Preparation before placement commences

Schools should identify where health and safety is addressed within their arrangements to prepare students for placement. This may take a variety of forms, such as task specific safety training, placement seminars or guidance leaflets within a placement pack. UCEA provides guidance on the general aspects of health and safety which should be covered.

(see Appendix C)

In addition, it is considered good practice to include advice on safety issues which are not work related but are a direct consequence of the placement, such as personal safety, foreign travel and safety in remote locations. As a minimum, students should be provided with the document 'Health and Safety Guidance Notes for Students going on Placement'

(see Appendix D).

Schools must retain records of the preparation which students receive. For instance, where a programme of pre-placement seminars is in place attendance should be compulsory and records of attendance should be retained by the School.

2.3 Information and guidance on reviews and contacts during placement

Within the placement documentation students should be given information on the level of contact which will be maintained by academic staff (i.e. visits, telephone contact, e-mail) and what is expected of the student with regard to maintaining contact e.g. regular e-mail. Students should be provided with emergency contacts at Queen's available to them throughout their time on placement to raise concerns or seek advice, and Schools should retain emergency contact numbers on file for each student. Students travelling to remote areas need to have arrangements in place for contact at suitable intervals.

3. Actions required during placements

3.1 Maintain agreed level of contact with placement providers and students and Include safety issues as an integral part of the placement monitoring process

During placement visits or telephone/e-mail contact with the student, academic staff should assure themselves that the student has no safety concerns with the activities that are being required of them. Any concerns raised by the student should be addressed with the placement provider. Safety concerns raised by the placement provider regarding the student must also be addressed and resolved.

3.2 Withdraw a student from placement where they are believed to be in imminent danger

Where a member of academic staff assesses a student to be exposed to an unacceptable level of risk, this must be addressed immediately. Appropriate action may be to immediately highlight concerns with the placement provider and attain a satisfactory resolution, or may require withdrawal of the student from the placement.

The University's Safety Service can provide advice to academic staff on safety issues, as required. Advice can also be obtained from the enforcing body for health and safety legislation within the UK, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). (See Appendix E for contact details for advice)

4. Actions required on completion of placements

4.1 Review Health and Safety experience of placement with returning students

This review process may take the form of face-to-face discussions, group discussions, questionnaires etc. Students may be prepared to provide more information on any concerns they may have had during placement on return to the University.

4.2 Review assessment of continued suitability of placement providers for next year

Feedback from students and from academic staff dealing with placement providers is useful when assessing the continued suitability of organisations for the following year. Difficulties encountered by students, both work based and external to the work environment, may alter the School's assessment of risk levels for the following years, e.g. placements in areas of civil unrest.

4.3 Review tutors experience of managing placements to inform development of internal procedures

Academic staff involved in the management of placements should review their experience at regular intervals. Difficulties experienced through the placement process may be usefully reviewed in forums such as staff meetings, School Safety Committees, consultation with the Careers Department etc.

Appendices

Appendix A

Sample: Information for the Placement Provider relating to health and safety expectations.

Appendix B

Sample: Information for Students on the placement process.

Appendix C

Health and Safety Topics which should be covered with students during briefing prior to going on Placement.

Appendix D

Health and Safety Guidance Notes for Students going on Placement.

Appendix E

Sources of Health and Safety advice for Academic Staff.

Appendix A

Sample: Information for the Placement Provider relating to health and safety expectations

Throughout the placement period we would expect our student to prove to be an effective, safe and reliable individual. You will appreciate that during this period the student is under your control while at work and, therefore, the primary statutory duty of care rests with your organisation. The University does, however, continue to have responsibilities towards each student, specifically in the arrangement of suitable and safe placements and in monitoring their progress during the placement period.

As part of our role the University will:

- prepare students for placement and ensure they are aware of general health and safety aspects, however this is of a general nature and does not include the specific information needed for any particular job or workplace;
- give students an opportunity to feed back to the University any problems experienced with regard to health and safety whilst on placement;
- respond to any negative feedback received from students in relation to health and safety practices during placements by informing placement providers.

With regard to health, safety and welfare, Placement Organisations are required to provide students with a duty of care equivalent to that given to their employees.

These responsibilities will include:

- providing the student with an induction to your workplace health and safety arrangements, including fire precautions, specific hazards and health and safety precautions;
- including the student in the risk assessment programme as it affects activities undertaken by them;
- providing appropriate instruction and training in working practices and in the control measures identified in risk assessments;
- providing ongoing supervision and training for the student in the performance of their duties;
- having a system of recording and investigating accidents and incidents;
- notifying the University of any accident/incident involving the student.

NB. Any additional aspects identified from the course risk assessment should be added.

Appendix B

Sample: Information for Students on the placement process

Going on placement is an integral and important part of your studies. In order to ensure your health and safety while on placement the School operates a placement approval and monitoring process which applies to all placements, whether in the UK, the EU or international.

Primary responsibility for your health and safety rests with the organisation providing your placement, and they must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the activities you perform do not expose you to uncontrolled risks. Queen's University will inform each placement provider of this obligation and see that you are fully informed of your role and receive all necessary training whilst on placement.

If you have identified a placement and begun the process of confirming it with your Placement Provider, inform your Placement Organiser within the School immediately so that the process below can be carried out:-

1. The School will write to your Placement Provider informing them of our expectations with regard to their ensuring your health and safety.
2. If the Placement Provider advises the School that they cannot meet these expectations then further discussions must take place or the placement proposal will be withdrawn.
3. You should inform your Placement Organiser within the School of any health issues, including any disability, impairment, medical condition including allergies etc. which may affect your health and safety whilst on placement. This allows the University, you and the Placement Provider to consider any reasonable adjustments which may be required to provide for your health and safety whilst on placement.
4. The School will supply you with information on health and safety prior to the commencement of your placement .
5. If you have any concerns regarding your health and safety whilst on placement, you must inform your Tutor or School Placement Organiser as soon as possible. This may lead to the placement being reviewed by the School.
6. Your Tutor or other representative of Queen's may visit you while on placement. If they have any concerns they will inform you, and this may lead to the placement being reviewed.
7. When the placement ends your Tutor or School Placement Organiser will ask for some feedback to help ascertain whether the placement is suitable for other students.

If you have any questions please contact your School Placement Organiser.

Appendix C

Health and safety topics which should be covered with students during briefing prior to going on placement.

ALL PLACEMENTS.

Health and safety responsibilities of students;

Health and safety responsibilities of the Placement Provider;

Health and safety induction

- the importance of receiving this
- when it should be given
- topics that should be covered (emergency arrangements, reporting of incidents etc.)
- action to take if induction training is not given;

Health and safety information, instruction, training and supervision as the placement progresses;

Assessing and managing risks for activities that will be undertaken;

Monitoring and providing feedback;

Action to take over any health and safety concerns.

EUROPEAN UNION/ INTERNATIONAL PLACEMENTS

Include the following hazards as they apply to the placement:-

Climatic extremes - high humidity, hypothermia, monsoon/storms, oxygen deficiency/rarefied air, sunburn/skin cancer, tidal and other water conditions, unusual winds (tornados, hurricanes);

Contact with animals (wild or domestic) - allergies, asthma, bites and other physical contact, dermatitis, rabies;

Contact with insects - bites, stings, Lyme's disease, malaria, yellow fever;

Contact with reptiles, snakes, scorpions etc - poisoning, remoteness/shock, availability of antidotes, medical back-up;

Contaminated food - allergies (food poisoning, Hepatitis A);

Contaminated water - legionella, leptospirosis;

Contaminated drinking water - diarrhoea, cholera, polio, and typhoid;

Electricity - compatibility of equipment and supply, different safety standards;

Emergencies - including fire arrangements and procedures (first aid provision, help numbers/contacts, response expected);

Local Environment - culture, customs, dress, religion;

Excavations/confined spaces/tunnelling - permits to work, risk appreciation, safe systems;
Hazardous substances/chemicals - spillage arrangements, transport requirements, antidote availability;

Legal differences - local codes/guidance;

Natural phenomenon - avalanches, earthquakes, volcanoes;

Sexual contact - contaminated needles, HIV, Hepatitis B;

Stress - accommodation problems, civil unrest, crime, vandalism, violence, fatigue, language/communication problems, lack of support (family/peers), workloads/excessive expectations, loneliness/remoteness, sickness, unfriendly environment;

Transportation - competent drivers, hazardous terrain, properly maintained vehicles, suitable transport;

Lone Working/ Personal Safety.

Hazard list taken from UCEA/USHA document 'Health and Safety Guidance when working overseas.'

Appendix D

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STUDENTS GOING ON PLACEMENT

Introduction

Placements provide an opportunity for you to apply skills acquired whilst at your institution to 'real-life' situations. Many qualities can also be learned and developed during a placement that could improve your employment prospects. However, there are health and safety aspects to every placement, namely:-

- being under the supervision of a third party;
- being involved with, or undertaking, activities where you have little or no experience, and
- working in and visiting environments and locations that you are unfamiliar with.

Health and Safety Responsibilities

(a) Placement Providers - organisations providing placements

- A general duty to ensure your health and safety whilst on placement;
- Take account of your potential inexperience for activities which you will undertake and put into place appropriate controls, and
- Provide you with information, instruction, training and supervision, including an induction.

(b) Students

- Not to do anything that puts you or others health and safety at risk;
- Follow health and safety instructions, information and training;
- Never intentionally misuse equipment or anything provided for health and safety reasons;
- Bring any health and safety concerns to the attention of your placement provider and your placement tutor/organiser at Queen's as soon as possible. **Do not wait for their next visit or contact with you.**

Placement Preparation

There are many aspects to placements that you have to prepare for, health and safety included. It is important that you:-

- attend briefings prior to placements commencing as health and safety will be covered, and
- familiarise yourself with the health and safety aspects of placements, particularly you and your placement provider's responsibilities, and what you should receive, particularly in the initial period.

Information, Instruction, Training and Supervision

These form the 'backbone' of seeking to ensure your health and safety whilst on placement and can include: classroom-type situations; face to face training; health and safety notices and signs; safe working procedures.

Upon commencing placement you must receive a health and safety induction. If you do not receive an induction then raise this with your placement provider. The induction should include:

Emergency Information

Whilst on placement it is essential that you receive information and instruction on what action to take should an emergency situation arise. Such situations include:-

- hearing the fire alarm;
- discovering a fire;
- requiring first aid assistance;
- threat to personal safety;
- spillage of a dangerous substance.

If you are not made aware of the correct actions to take raise this with your Placement Provider. This information should be given at the induction stage and where a change of work location or activity occurs.

Assessing and Controlling Risks

Your placement provider is expected to determine the risks encountered with the activities you will be involved with and put into place measures to control these risks. Such measures may be no different to those already in place for their employees. However, because of your potential inexperience, or other factors, a higher level of control measure may be required, especially in the early periods of the placement.

Measures to control risks can include:-

- providing information, instruction, training and supervision;
- having in place guarding, ventilation systems etc to control risks at source;
- ensuring equipment used is appropriate and in safe condition;
- providing, and ensuring the use of, personal protective equipment and clothing.

It is important that you are made aware of the risks associated with the activities you will be involved with, and what is in place and required of you to control these risks.

As your placement progresses so will the information, instruction and training you receive. Never undertake an activity or go into an area unless you have received appropriate information, instruction and training to feel competent and confident to carry on.

Levels of supervision will vary from placement to placement and at points within a particular placement. Do not be afraid to ask questions of your supervisor, and to raise your concerns if you feel there is inadequate supervision.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

An element of controlling risks may be the use or wearing of PPE. PPE encompasses goggles, hard hats, ear defenders, face masks, overalls, gloves, waterproof clothing etc.

If you are issued with PPE it is important you are made aware of:-

- the reason it is required;
- how to ensure a proper fit so it will work effectively;
- how to maintain, store, recognise defects and obtain replacements.

If you believe an item of PPE is defective do not continue to use it. Ask your placement provider for information on its correct operation and adjustment and, if necessary, for a replacement. Do not carry out the work without the correct protection.

Reporting Accidents, Incidents and Health and Safety Concerns

It is important that you report accidents and incidents you are involved in - whether injury has resulted or not. This will enable your placement provider to investigate the circumstances and take any necessary action. Reporting a 'near miss' incident could ensure that nobody is injured next time. At induction you should be made aware of the reporting procedures.

If you do have any health and safety concerns during your placement the first action is to raise these with your placement provider ie injury, training, pregnancy. Where you believe these concerns are serious also make your placement tutor at Queen's aware - don't wait to the next scheduled visit. Never undertake an activity, use equipment or go into an area unless you are competent and confident to do so.

Monitoring and Feedback

You are an essential element in the monitoring of health and safety performance of your placement provider. Ensure you discuss health and safety aspects with your placement tutor and complete any necessary paperwork that is required of you.

When you return to Queen's at the end of your placement provide information on how you feel the placement provider approached health and safety.

This information is very useful to the University as a means of reviewing the health and safety arrangements of the placement provider and deciding whether or not the placement is suitable for other students.

EU and International Placements

Whilst types of work and activities undertaken during overseas placements may vary from country-to-country there are also other aspects that can have potential health and safety implications. These include:-

- long-haul travel (jet-lag, difference in local hours, effect on body - initially more fatigued);
- unfamiliarity with, and little knowledge of, placement locations and surrounding areas (personal safety, no-go areas, areas of high crime, safe use of transport);
- different climatic conditions (higher temperatures, more extreme winters);
- contracting illnesses, receiving injuries and obtaining medical treatment (venomous animals, contagious diseases, vaccinations, contaminated drinking water, local health care arrangements, contacting emergency services);

- cultural and language differences (accepted practices, local laws and religions, communication more difficult).

These will also affect you during your own time whilst on placement.

It is important that prior to undertaking any EU or international placement you discuss the necessary arrangements that need to be in place and what you require to do in preparation.

Appendix ESources of Health and Safety advice for Academic Staff

University Safety Services

Tel: 028 9097 4613

E-mail: safety@qub.ac.uk

Website:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/OccupationalHealthandSafety/>

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

Tel: HSE Infoline 0845 345 0055

Website: www.hse.gov.uk

The Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI)

Tel: One-2-One helpline 0800 0320 121

E-mail: hseini@detini.gov.uk

Website: www.hseini.gov.uk