



University of
St Andrews

Work placements

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UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

POLICY ON THE MANAGEMENT OF WORK PLACEMENTS

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1. Introduction

The University recognises that Work Placements may form a valuable component of a St Andrews degree programme and a student's academic experience. The format and function of Work Placements vary greatly depending on the subject discipline and the programme context. This policy aims to provide a generic framework for managing the diversity of Work Placements and so outline the minimum requirements that the University expects Schools, Host Organisations and students to meet. Rather than stipulating subject-specific practices it aims to provide a set of broad principles that should underpin practice across the institution.

2. Definition and scope

Work Placements are credit-bearing placements which are undertaken as an integral part of a St Andrews degree programme and which are hosted by a third party outside the University learning environment in an industrial, business, healthcare or other professional working structure. Work Placements may extend over an entire academic year, or a shorter period within the academic year or summer vacation. Work Placements may be compulsory or optional, paid or unpaid, in the UK or abroad.

This policy and guidance applies to Placements at Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught level only.

The University does not take responsibility for any non-credit bearing work experience, observerships and internships which students organise independently.

3. Principles

- Work Placements may form a valuable component of a St Andrews degree programme and as such the University is keen to support Schools in the development of Placement programmes;
- The University seeks to maintain a high quality learning experience for all students, whether in St Andrews or elsewhere;
- Work Placements should augment and develop the skills and competencies delivered by the degree programme and be relevant to the degree subject;

- While the University will provide assistance to students in finding a Placement, students are responsible for securing an approved Placement on most programmes. The University cannot normally guarantee Placements with any third party;
- The University's primary concern is that students have a safe and successful experience and so all Placements will be assessed and approved to ensure they provide a safe and suitable environment;
- Students remain registered at St Andrews while on Placement and will receive ongoing support from the University as appropriate to their Placement and degree programme;
- Work Placements are valuable to Host Organisations as a way of interacting with St Andrews students who bring fresh ideas, perspectives and enthusiasm.

4. Learning outcomes

It is expected that students will gain professional and interpersonal skills which complement or run in parallel to the learning experience delivered at St Andrews.

On completion of the Work Placement, students can be expected to:

1. be able to appreciate how areas of their academic studies are applicable in an industrial, professional or research environment;
2. have applied and/or extended their practical competence and knowledge base;
3. have improved professional communications, presentation and interpersonal skills and, if relevant, skills in another language;
4. be able to adjust to the requirements of professional workplaces in terms of professional conduct, including work ethic, safety in the workplace, reliability and personal responsibility;
5. will fully appreciate the necessity of being able to work effectively as an individual, exercising initiative as appropriate, and as part of a team in a professional setting;
6. accurately record and manage information, data and data analysis as appropriate to the Placement
7. develop a range of self-management and life-long learning skills including time management, adaptability, resilience and enterprise;
8. develop problem-solving skills in a range of familiar and unfamiliar situations;

In addition, Learning Outcomes for specific Work Placement programmes will be detailed in the relevant module information.

5. Roles and responsibilities

It is important that each of the parties involved in Placements has a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. These will be formally agreed in the Work Placement Agreement, and are detailed below.

Heads of School have responsibility for ensuring that these guidelines are implemented in their School and that relevant staff are aware of and comply with the guidelines;

A Placement Co-ordinator is a designated academic member of staff within the School who ensures that all required arrangements are in place and that any individual placement and its structure/content is appropriate to the degree programme.

A Placement Mentor/ Academic Monitor is a designated member of staff within the School who is responsible for liaising with the Host Organisation and monitoring the progress of the student during the Placement.

In some cases, the roles of Placement Co-ordinator and Placement Mentor may be fulfilled by the same member of staff.

The Work-Based Supervisor is a designated person within the Host Organisation who liaises with the School and is responsible for supervising the student while on Placement.

The Global Office is responsible for facilitating and storing the Work Placement Agreement, maintenance of the Placement record, central pre-departure information and support to students, administration of Erasmus+ funding, and any relevant reporting.

Responsibilities of the University

Before

- Provide students with clear information about eligibility criteria for Work Placement components and how they fit into the overall degree programme.
- Define the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the Work Placement in terms of the knowledge, skills and competencies to be acquired.
- Support the student in finding an appropriate Work Placement to achieve the learning outcomes.
- Where appropriate, provide students with clear criteria for the approval of Placements and stipulate a process for reaching a decision on the suitability of Placements.
- Undertake an appropriate risk assessment for the Placement. This may be an individual risk assessment or adaption of a generic one to suit a particular Placement and participating student.
- Provide the Host Organisation with information about the academic framework, learning outcomes and assessment mechanisms which govern the Placement.
- Where appropriate, negotiate and sign a Work Placement Agreement with the student and the Host Organisation. In cases of regular providers, the University and the Host Organisation will normally sign a framework agreement to cover all Placements of a similar nature.
- Making students aware of the practical and professional requirements, including breach of contract, of the Host Organisation and, if relevant, the cultural life of the host country.
- Provide full pre-departure briefing including emergency contacts and advice to students concerning accommodation, financial arrangements, travel and immigration.
- Ensure students and Host Organisations know how to raise concerns with the University or report any difficulties they might experience during the Placement.

During

- Monitor the progress of students on placement and provide ongoing support throughout.
- Monitor the quality of the Placement as per the Work Placement Agreement.
- Ensure a contingency plan is in place should the student be unable to complete the Placement at the Host Organisation.

After

- Debrief the student on completion of the Work Placement.
- Where appropriate, provide students with advice and support to ease their transition back to St Andrews after completion of the Placement.
- Maintain a list of approved Host Organisations and undertake review of regular providers.

Responsibilities of the Host Organisation

Before

- Provide a job/ person specification for the Placement.
- Assign to students tasks and responsibilities to match their intended knowledge, skills, and desired learning outcomes and ensure that appropriate support and equipment are available.
- As appropriate, negotiate and sign a Work Placement Agreement with the student and the University.
- Appoint a Work-Based Supervisor to mentor and manage students throughout the Placement.
- If relevant to the student's programme, provide guidance to the student in finding appropriate accommodation.
- Confirm to the University that it has its own risk assessment documentation for the Placement.

During

- Monitor the progress of students on placement and provide ongoing support throughout.
- Provide the student with a full and clear induction, including health and safety arrangements, fire precautions, emergency evacuation arrangements and the main findings from any relevant risk assessment.
- Assist the University with any information about the Placements of overseas students as required by UK immigration authorities.
- Consult with the University in cases of accidents or incidents involving the student, or breaches of discipline by the student.
- Co-operate with the University to meet the requirements of the student's academic programme such as the need for assessment and feedback.

After

- On completion of the Placement, provide feedback to the University as agreed at the outset of the Placement.

Responsibilities of the Student

Before

- Where appropriate as determined by the nature of the programme, be responsible for securing an approved Work Placement.
- Attend any pre-departure sessions and ensure that information provided by the University and the Host Organisation is understood.
- If participating in a Work Placement abroad, be responsible for ensuring they have valid passports and visas for their destination and their return to the UK.
- Seek any relevant advice from their own GP in relation to immunisations and health issues.
- Ensure that all documentation which requires their input is submitted by the required deadline.

During

- Comply with all arrangements agreed for the Work Placement and approach the opportunity in a professional manner which upholds and enhances the University's reputation.
- Abide by the rules and regulations of the Host Organisation, including working hours, code of conduct, rules of confidentiality and social media policy.
- Be fully aware of the health and safety aspects of the Work Placement and comply with all guidance issued by the School and the Host Organisation.
- Communicate with the University pro-actively, especially if a problem arises or there are any concerns about the Placement.
- Complete all academic requirements as stipulated by their School in St Andrews.
- Comply with any Tier 4 visa requirements as detailed by the University (or UKVI).
- Comply with the University's relevant Terms & Conditions.

After

- Where appropriate, on return, provide feedback on their experience and be pro-active in integrating their learning from the Placement with their academic studies, and in helping to prepare the next cohort of students for their participation in a Work Placement.

6. Assessment and recognition

Assessment of the work undertaken during the Placement may use a variety of methods appropriate to the St Andrews degree programme.

- The Placement's contribution to the programme's overall assessment must be transparent.
- Deadlines for the submission of assessed work must be made explicit and timely.
- Assessment should be sensitive to any confidentiality issues at the Host Organisation e.g. IP.
- The Host Organisation should be informed of the assessment criteria as appropriate to the Placement.
- The Host Organisation's role in assessment should be clear and transparent.
- Confirmation from the Host Organisation that the Placement has been satisfactorily completed will normally be required as part of assessment.
- Assessment methods will be approved as part of the module approval process.

Work Placements will be recorded on the HEAR transcript as appropriate.

7. Quality assurance

All modules involving a Work Placement component are reviewed and approved through the normal channels for curriculum approval.

It is expected that Schools will assure themselves that each student will receive a beneficial experience appropriate to their academic programme by participating in the Work Placement.

Attention should be paid to the following areas:

- Examination of the knowledge content, standards and, as appropriate, learning outcomes of the Work Placement and its value in relation to the degree programme;
- Suitability of the Host Organisation as a Placement provider;

- The importance of regular and documented contact between the School, the Work-Based Supervisor and the student, and arrangements for any timely site visits during the Placement. A site visit is required for all Placements in industrial settings;
- The importance of documented student feedback on the Work Placement, both during and following completion;
- Review of Work Placements before they become regular providers and subsequent regular review as part of the Academic Monitoring process.

Work Placement modules and programmes will be included for review in any Academic Monitoring activities undertaken in the School. In addition, the Academic Monitoring Group receives an annual summary report on Study Abroad and Work Placements.

8. Risk management

The University recognises that some Placements are lower risk than others and that risk management should be proportionate. However, there are six risk management steps which must be undertaken in the establishment and operation of any Work Placement.

1. Review and approval of the Placement/ regular Host Organisation by the School, including a risk assessment to include:
 - a. Ability of the prospective Host Organisation to provide the resources to operate the Placement successfully;
 - b. Ability of the prospective Host Organisation to provide a safe working environment;
 - c. If outside the UK, any relevant Foreign & Commonwealth Office travel advice
2. Establishment of an Agreement between the University and regular Host Organisations to cover the roles and responsibilities of each. Alternatively, in the case of Placements sourced and secured by individual students, a signed Work Placement Agreement between the University, Host Organisation and Student which outlines roles and responsibilities and emergency contacts;
3. Pre-departure briefing of the student;
4. An agreed and appropriate contingency plan to ensure successful completion of the module.
5. Monitoring and contact during the Placement;
6. Evaluation of the Placement upon completion.

9. Work Placement Agreement

As part of the approval process of any individual Work Placement sourced and secured by an individual student, a Work Placement Agreement must be signed by the University, the Host Organisation and the Student before the commencement of a Placement.

As a minimum, the Agreement includes:

- Details of the Host Organisation;
- Contact details of the Work-Based Supervisor and Placement Mentor, and emergency contacts;
- Roles and responsibilities of each party;
- Learning Outcomes and job description for the Placement;
- Arrangements for parties to raise concerns or complaints;
- Insurance arrangements;
- Reference to the University's Policy on Managing Work Placements

- A statement of the arrangements through which the parties will ensure compliance with statutory obligations including equality, data protection, health and safety, immigration, and, where appropriate, Erasmus+.

Where the University wishes to establish a broader partnership with a Host Organisation to allow multiple Placements of a similar nature, a framework agreement will be established to govern the relationship between the University and the Host Organisation.

10. UKVI compliance

Under UK immigration regulations, Placements must normally not exceed 33% of the entire course of students studying on a student visa in the UK.

The University continues to sponsor international students who are on a student visa during Work Placements. Additional responsibilities associated with sponsoring a student visa holder, hosting a student visa holder, or participating in a Work Placement as a student visa holder are detailed in the Work Placement Agreement.

If the University is required to make changes to Placement arrangements in order to comply with changes to UKVI policy, the Global Office will communicate this to Schools, students and Host Organisations as early as possible.

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.1	Updates to wording of UKVI compliance. Updating references to Global Office	Approved	-	February 2022
1.2	Update for one year	Approved	Administrative officer	25 June 2024