

# Health and Safety Guidance for the Placement of Higher Education Students

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## Links to associated documents:

[Appendix 1](#) – Risk Profiling and Risk Reducing Actions

[Appendix 2](#) – Risk Assessment for Student Placement

[Appendix 3](#) – Student Placement Health and Safety Agreement

[Appendix 4](#) – Information for Students on the Health and Safety Aspects of Placements

## 1. Introduction

This document implements revised guidance issued by the Universities and College Employers Association [UCEA] in 2009. Its aim is to encourage academic schools to adopt a risk based approach to the management of health and safety risks arising out of student placements. It sets out reasonably practicable actions to: -

- Ensure the university fulfils its statutory and common law duties of care towards its students undertaking placements; and
- Assist in making students sufficiently informed to enable them to question their placement providers in respect of health and safety and be a component part of the health and safety monitoring process.

## 2. Scope

The term placement refers to a period of work experience with an employer [the placement provider] which is integral requirement of the students University course.

## 3. Risks & Liabilities

The following health and safety risks could arise from student placements

- Injury or ill health to a student arising out of their placement provider's activities etc;

- Injury or ill health to others (e.g. placement provider's employees) arising from the student's actions whilst on placement;
- Injury or ill health to a student not arising out of their placement provider's activities but as a direct consequence of being on placement; and
- Injury or ill health to University staff during placement visits.

If any of the above were to occur, criminal or civil action may be taken against the student, the placement provider and/or its employees, the University and/or its employees, depending on the circumstances.

#### **4. Extent of responsibilities and liabilities**

Primary responsibility for the health and safety of students whilst on placement is with the placement providers.

Students have health and safety responsibilities to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions.

Liabilities against the University could arise from: -

- Civil liability for injury or ill health to students whilst on placement, including foreseeable risks outside of placement activities;
- Civil liability for loss, injury or ill health arising out of the negligent actions of students;
- Limited statutory liability for injury or ill health to students whilst on placement; and
- Statutory and civil liabilities arising out of the health and safety risks to members of staff during placement visits.

#### **5. A Risk Management Approach**

Risk management principles should be used to identify control measures that are appropriate for managing risks associated with placements. The result should be that the requirements for low risk placements are minimised with greater resource being directed at placements that are of higher risk.

The following aspects are viewed as integral to sensible risk management and ensuring the health and safety of students whilst on placement: -

- Review and approval of prospective placements;
- Providers accepting the University's health and safety expectations whilst students are on placement;
- Preparation of students ahead of going onto placement;
- Training of staff
- Processes for raising and resolving any health and safety issues arising during the placement;
- Health and safety risks to members of staff when undertaking placement visits are subject to suitable and sufficient assessment; and
- Health and safety as it relates to placements is subject to appropriate levels of monitoring and review.

#### **6. Review & Approval Process**

Prospective placements may be identified by the School or by the individual student. If the latter the student must advise their placement tutor, the school's placement unit or organiser etc before that placement goes ahead. Failure to do so will result in the placement not being accepted.

**6.1. The risk assessment and review** process involves considering the placement, the placement provider and the specific student or student group in terms of the health and safety factors listed below and assigning a level of risk. [Appendix 1](#) provides guidance assessing the level of risk associated with each factor and examples of the risk reduction actions that might be available. [Appendix 2](#) can then be used to record the significant findings of the risk assessment, any necessary actions and their satisfactory implementation.

**Work factors:**

These relate to the placement provider and to the work that the student will be carrying out. They include the nature of the work-based hazards to which the student may be exposed. Control measures may include the professional knowledge and expertise of the student.

**Travel and transportation factors:**

Driving and travel while carrying out the business of the placement provider can be a risk. Placements do not just involve the work carried out for the placement provider. Depending on the nature and location of the placement, the student may face significant health, safety and welfare issues associated with their travel to and from the placement and to and from their accommodation.

**Location and/or region factors:**

The location of the placement can have considerable impact particularly if it is abroad in a country that the student is not acquainted with, though it could apply to international students enrolled at the University and going on placement in the UK.

**General/environmental health factors:**

The student may face significant health, safety and welfare issues associated with the environmental conditions in their place of work or the general location, their accommodation, or their food and drink.

**Individual student factors:**

Each student is an individual. Their health; their knowledge, skills and experience; and their personality could have an impact on health and safety in particular environments. Students with personal factors (e.g. health, disability, linguistic or cultural) which may require specific adjustments or support should have equivalent opportunities in choice of placements.

The School should work with the placement provider to ensure that access and support requirements will be provided for the student when on placement. Students with a health condition or disability that may require adjustments or support whilst on placement are strongly encouraged to disclose this and to agree for the University to disclose information on this when identifying possible

providers. Advice on managing placements for disabled students is available in the DfES publication *Providing Work Placements for Disabled Students*

### **Insurance limitations:**

Insurance is a means of transferring risk by paying for the provision of professional support and financial recompense if things go wrong. Any assessment must include consideration of the extent and limitations of the insurance arrangements of both the University and the placement provider, the contractual arrangements in place and the legal requirements in the country or countries where the placement will take place. It is useful to distinguish between those issues that can be considered by the University generally and those issues that are specific to a particular placement.

The advice of the Insurance Officer should be sought where there is any doubt about the Insurance arrangements.

## **6.2. Clarify expectations with placement provider**

Placement organisers must inform the placement provider of their expectations in respect of health and safety and raise any questions that need to be answered in order for the placement to be approved. These expectations and questions should be set out in a written document before the placement starts.

[Appendix 3](#) is a standard document that sets out a basic set of expectations which will form the basis of the placement agreement between the University and the placement provider. In addition to those indicated it may be necessary to include other questions arising from your risk assessment. These written communications replace the questionnaires which have been sent to placement providers in the past.

The placement provider must acknowledge in writing or electronically their receipt of the document, agree to its content and provide answers to specific questions before the placement can commence.

Where a placement provider is used for several students the document can be amended to reflect this to avoid duplication. Where a provider is used on regular basis it is recommended that the placement agreement should be issued and signed annually.

## **6.3. Pre-Placement visits**

In most cases these will not be required unless there are specific concerns that are best resolved by a visit and inspection. DfES Guidance *Providing Work Placements for Disabled Students* states that it may be necessary to visit the placement provider with the student

## **6.4. Preparing the Student**

The student must be adequately prepared on the health and safety aspects ahead of undertaking their particular placement. This should include: -

- Issuing written pre-placement information about the following
  - The placement process,
  - the expectations of the student,
  - The expectations of the placement
  - The expectations of the School and placement organiser
  - The aforementioned health and safety factors.

([Appendix 4](#) provides suggested content for such a document).

- Additional information relating to the specific risks of a particular placement.
- Establish the means of communication and frequency of contact with the student whilst on placement.

In addition the following may also be useful means of preparing the student:

- Delivering a short group briefing session at which attendance is recorded. (An example of this would be pre-placement training session for working on farms delivered to Vet Students)
- One-to-one or smaller-sized group discussion.

For certain placements it may be necessary for the student to have levels of technical and professional competence before arrival at the placement. In these cases it would be appropriate to incorporate in the written communication that the placement provider will inform the University of any basic competencies that they require a student to have attained.

#### **6.5. Approve the placement**

Review the information obtained from the placement provider and any feedback received from previous placements with that provider. Ensure that any health and safety concerns were resolved satisfactorily. When satisfied that the provider understands and accepts their responsibilities, there are no unresolved health and safety concerns, all necessary actions and measures identified in the risk assessment are in place the placement may be approved.

#### **7. Monitor the placement and deal with any health and safety issues**

The responsibility for looking after the health and safety of the student whilst on placement rests with the placement provider. However it is important that placement tutors monitor the adequacy of health and safety arrangements as part of the academic assessment process. Monitoring for health and safety during the placement can include: -

- Regular feedback from the student; ask about their induction training, any accidents to themselves or to others, are they aware of any unsafe practices, do they feel they are adequately supervised.
- Feedback from the placement provider; is the student observing health and safety rules and procedures?
- Observations and discussions during periodic tutor visits; look for unsafe practices or conditions.
- Other periodic contact with the student.

Health and safety issues that arise during the placement must receive the appropriate level of investigation. Whilst this will typically involve discussions with both the student and the placement provider, advice may need to be sought from the Safety Office

#### **8. Review the placement**

Placement organisers should regularly review their portfolio of placement providers and identify any where students or visiting tutors have raised concerns. Ensure that these were appropriately investigated and where upheld

that the necessary actions were implemented by the placement provider to prevent recurrence. The outcome of this review should be used to inform risk assessments and decisions about the suitability of placement providers for future use.

### Student placements – health and safety process flowchart

