

Policy Coversheet

Name of Policy:	Placement and Practice Learning Policy
Purpose of Policy:	To ensure oversight and consistency in the provision of practice learning across the University.
Intended audience(s):	All students registered on awards with practice learning at Staffordshire University, staff and placement providers
Approval for this policy given by:	Academic Board
Last Review Date:	01/07/2018
Review Due Date: (3 years from last review)	01/07/2019
Individual responsible for review:	Registrar
Authorising department:	Student and Academic Services

¹ Educational partners who deliver Staffordshire University awards

² QAA (2012) UK Quality Code for HE: Chapter B10 'Managing HE provision with others': Gloucester: QAA p24 Indicator 8

PLACEMENT AND PRACTICE LEARNING POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The focus of this policy is for work based and practice learning opportunities that are a planned and integrated as part of a student's course of study at Staffordshire University. This policy is intended to be useful to staff irrespective of the level or mode of study, the academic subject, whether work-experience based or practice learning. This policy has been written to establish a minimum standard and support the development of good practice and consistency of application.
- 1.2 Practice learning is important in that it helps to bring together academic theory and workplace practice, integrating working with learning. Practice learning might be about increasing a student's employability, but may also be a significant element of a qualification and therefore **must be considered in the same manner as other forms of learning, teaching and assessment when it comes to quality and standards at Staffordshire University.**

2. Scope

- 2.1 Practice learning is integral to a broad range of courses at Staffordshire University. Therefore, this policy is intended to ensure oversight and consistency in how to design and manage practice learning in a manner which is robust and meets the requirements of the UK Quality Code and other professional and practice regulatory body (PSRB) standards.
- 2.2 Where a collaborative agreement with a partner¹ of the University devolves to that partner the responsibility for the arrangement and/or management of a practice, the partner should adhere to this policy.

The Practice Learning Policy has been informed by the following external reference points:

- ASET 'Good Practice Learning Guide for Work Based and Placement Learning in Higher Education';
- QAA UK Quality Code Chapter B10 'Working with Others'

3. Types of practice learning

- 3.1 In general, practice learning will take one of two forms:
- Where courses require **external partners to be formally involved with the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment** in practice the University must be confident that the host partner organisation has the **capacity and capability to assume that responsibility** to the standard required by the University.

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- Where employers/host partner organisations are **not formally involved in assessment of learning** the University must be confident that the host organisation has the **capacity** and **capability** to provide and support **learning opportunities**.

Type of practice learning	Definition
Practice Placements	Governed by a formal agreement by Staffordshire University and the host partner organisation, these practice experiences are usually undertaken on courses where a qualification leads to a licence to practice such as in health, education and social care. Students will often complete multiple practice experiences as part of their course of study and organisations will be involved in the assessment of student learning.
Work-experience	Short term informal learning activities where a student will spend time on employer premises but have no formal contract.
Sandwich placements	An equivalent of a year's academic study typically (30 – 52 weeks, as agreed by School) undertaken by undergraduate students as the penultimate year of their programme.
Semester placements	A full-time placement would be equivalent to a full semester (9 - 15 weeks depending on the calendar). A part-time placement could be 1 or 2 days a week on placement (integrated with usual academic study)
Internships	A short-term placement opportunity usually offered and advertised by employers, although may also be secured through a speculative application. Taken by students at any level of study at a vacation time or part-time during an academic year. The term may also be used to describe opportunities for new graduates.
Semester or year abroad	When a student opts to study at an overseas education provider which has collaborative/reciprocal agreements with Staffordshire University, this could include a period of work or may be study only. This may be part of, or additional to, their degree e.g. Erasmus, the EU Educational Exchange Programme.
Work based awards	A course where the employment setting is used as a contextual focus for the learning regularly throughout the course.
Graduate traineeship (Erasmus+)	A work placement undertaken by a student abroad as part of their degree and funded by Erasmus+. Higher education work placements and internships should last between two and 12 months and be located within one of 32 countries participating in the scheme.
Apprenticeships	An apprenticeship is a job with training to industry standards. It is a substantial programme of training which is both on and off the job and allows the apprentice entry to a recognised occupation. Apprenticeships are developed by employers who are also responsible for funding, training and employing the apprentice. Competence is tested by an independent, end point assessment

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4. Governance framework

- 4.1 The University should ensure that it maintains “proper control of the academic standards of courses where learning opportunities are delivered with others”². The inclusion of practice learning as an integral part of a course of study must therefore be approved as part of the overall course approval process and must be monitored and reviewed as part of the usual monitoring and review process.

Implementation

- 4.2 The School should seek to ensure the suitability of the host organisation for the University to work with and must have appropriate processes in place to ensure the suitability of placement hosts and to meet any regulatory and professional body standards (where appropriate).
- 4.3 The University/School should approve any publicity relating to practice opportunities on its course, in conjunction with Marketing and Public Relations.
- 4.4 Appropriate levels of staffing should be committed to the management and support of practice learning. All staff should be prepared and supported to undertake their practice related responsibilities. There should be documentary evidence to record that staff have been given this preparation.
- 4.5 Students undertaking practice learning should be prepared and supported in their practice learning activities. There should be documentary evidence to record that students have been provided with this preparation.
- 4.6 Practice partners should be appropriately prepared and supported to undertake their required level of responsibility according to the defined type of practice learning.
- 4.7 Evidence of a host partner/organisation practice suitability check, undertaken by the University and a tri party written agreement, signed by all 3 parties (student, University and practice provider), to confirm roles, responsibilities and authority should be in place before the start of any period of practice learning.
- 4.8 The host partner/organisation must be provided with a named nominated contact at the University to use in case of an emergency, enquiry, complain or to raise concerns.
- 4.9 A process must be in place to enable students to reflect on their learning experience both whilst in practice (for example, through the use of a reflective diary or regular meetings with a mentor/workplace supervisor) and after the period of practice learning has ended.
- 4.10 A process must be in place to secure feedback from students, University staff and practice providers. This should feed into the annual monitoring processes.
- 4.11 Schools should ensure that all relevant University/School processes and procedures to manage any complaints, concerns and fitness to practice issues arising on/or as a result of practice, are available to practice providers, students, service users and University staff.

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5. Where practice learning is integral to course design

- 5.1 The overall aim and learning outcomes for the practice-based element of the course must be articulated in the course specification. Where appropriate, the course design must ensure that the requirements of relevant regulatory and professional body or employers consulted as part of the course design and validation process are reflected in the delivery of practice learning.
- 5.2 In particular, for sandwich placements consideration must be given to University regulations to ensure that assessment requirements are fully met.
- 5.3 Consideration should be given to the implications of students not securing or needing to change their practice learning. This should be made clear in the course handbook or specific practice handbook.

6. Preparation for practice learning

- 6.1 Schools must ensure that students undertake appropriate preparation before their period of practice learning and are provided with the knowledge and resources necessary to achieve their learning outcome(s) in practice.
- 6.2 A handbook or specific practice handbook should provide students with information to support their period of practice learning. The following is recommended as a minimum requirement:
 - Introduction to a period of practice learning and identification of learning outcomes to be achieved in practice
 - Identify assessment processes to be followed (where applicable)
 - Responsibilities of the student
 - Responsibilities of the practice tutor
 - Responsibilities of the practice provider
 - Named contact information for support at the University
 - Information and processes for students experiencing problems/concerns during their period of practice learning
 - Schedule of practice visits (where applicable)
 - Details of all relevant practice documentation
 - Practice visit record (where applicable)

The course team must ensure that the practice host organisation is provided with access to a handbook or specific practice handbook which should include a named contact at the University.

7. Practice Setting suitability

- 7.1 In all cases the University is responsible for ensuring the host partner organisation and the practice settings suitability to support learning in practice.

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- 7.2 The School should ensure that the practice setting, the working environment and the arrangements for support are approved prior to students undertaking their practice experience.

8. Conducting practice setting suitability checks

University level

- 8.1 A suitability check of the host organisation should be completed using the Placement/Practice Learning Provider Organisational Checklist provided in appendix 1.
- 8.2 The organisation checklist in appendix 1 may be adapted as required, to reflect different School/course level requirements. Indicator 6 in Chapter B10 of the UK Quality Code advises that such enquiries should be “proportionate to the complexity and volume of the provision involved and the risks it may present” ².
- 8.3 The organisation checklist should be signed for approval by a senior member of staff within the School and/or partner organisation. The checklist should be held on record centrally in the University and should be reviewed every five years (or sooner if there are significant changes with the provider organisation).
- 8.4 Organisations who are deemed to be high risk may still be used, but the School/department should mitigate against this risk (e.g. by the use of additional interactions) and record this action on the organisation checklist form (appendix 1) form.

School level

- 8.5 An educational suitability check of the individual practice setting, and risks associated with the intended practice activities should **be carried out by the School, using their agreed (and designed) documentation**, prior to any students embarking on a practice placement. This is to assure that the practice setting is an appropriate learning environment to deliver the intended learning outcomes.
- 8.6 All documentation should be signed for approval by the course leader or other appropriate member of School/partner staff.
- 8.7 It may be necessary for the School to check any contracts of employment presented to students.

9. Health and safety

- 9.1 The organisational checklist and all School documentation should seek to ensure that all host practice organisations are fully compliant with all health and safety legislation. In cases where compliance cannot be guaranteed host organisations should not be used for practice learning.

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International travel

- 9.2 All staff and students travelling internationally on University business must obtain approval prior to making any arrangements from a member of the University Executive, or in the case of students travelling on an ERASMUS exchange approval from the ERASMUS office.
- 9.3 All staff and students travelling on University business (for example, to a placement or field trip abroad) are expected to keep their department / School fully informed of any international travel they are planning to make and to take all reasonable steps to research the risk associated with their planned activities. In particular, they are required to keep abreast of any changes in risk classification on their destination by checking the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) published advice.
- 9.4 In cases where students will be travelling abroad the School should ensure that host practice organisation contact details are recorded and that a risk assessment is completed to include, but not limited to:
- Travel arrangements
 - Loss of passport/visa documentation
 - Security
 - Health & safety
 - Medical needs
 - Lone travel
 - Contacts in case of emergency or unforeseen circumstances
- 9.5 Schools must ensure that students undertaking international travel as part of a programme of study are suitably trained, knowledgeable about their destination and experienced to do so.
- 9.6 The School should also store copies of insurance documentation, student passport (checked and verified), discussions with the student concerning Foreign and Commonwealth Office country travel advice and a record of a 'contextualisation meeting' being held, the focus of which should be to manage student expectation relevant to their country of travel.
- 9.7 The University has travel cover in place for both staff and students travelling overseas on University business. Schools must ensure that a Business Travel Certificate is completed for those individuals who require travel cover. A copy of the completed Certificate should be retained by the traveller as it is their only evidence of cover.
- 9.8 Schools are reminded that the University Travel Cover may be invalidated in cases where travel is allowed to proceed against specific FCO advice.

10. Practice support

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- 10.1 For some courses it will be appropriate for a University tutor to undertake a practice visit. Where this is deemed appropriate the number of visits and the expectation of these visits will be defined in a handbook or specific practice handbook.
- 10.2 Practice visits and their outcomes should be recorded and mechanisms for progressing and escalating any concerns raised in practice should be devised by the School.
- 10.3 Supervision during a period of practice learning will be identified through the tri-party written agreement.

For students studying in the UK on a tier 4 visa, additional requirements may be needed to ensure that the students' practice arrangements can be monitored in accordance with visa requirements. This may mean that a course team needs to undertake additional monitoring.

11. Assessment of practice learning

- 11.1 The assessment criteria for practice learning must be clear to all involved and must be included in the handbook or specific practice handbook. Practice assessment should be designed to ensure outcomes can be completed within a set time frame to facilitate student progression to level/stage.
- 11.2 Practice learning which is a planned and integral part of the course must be assessed by an appropriately qualified practitioner, as defined at the point of course approval.
- 11.3 Where staff at the practice host organisation are involved **in supporting and/or assessing students** learning the School should work collaboratively with the host provider to deliver relevant staff development for nominated members of staff to competently undertake their role.

12. Practice evaluation

- 12.1 Schools must have a process to enable students and host partner organisations to evaluate their experience as a practice learning provider, for example, development of a questionnaire hosted through Office Forms or Qualtrics.
- 12.2 The School must use their evaluation feedback provided from both students and host organisations to inform their annual monitoring processes.

13. Complaints

- 13.1 School should ensure that all parties are informed of the procedure for making a formal complaint:

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/assets/Complaints%20Procedure%202016-17_tcm44-91330.pdf

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PLACEMENT / PRACTICE LEARNING PROVIDER ORGANISATION CHECKLIST

This form only needs to be completed once for an organisation. To check if a form has already been completed please go to: <\\crwnstah1\qualitydocuments\Placement and Practice Learning\>

1. CONTACT DETAILS

Address	
Contact name and position	
Contact email address	
Contact phone numbers	
Organisation website address	
Organisation facebook page	

2. ORGANISATION DETAILS

	Details	Level of Risk 1 - Low 2 - Low 3 - Medium 4 - Medium 5 - High	Guidance Notes
Type of organisation (eg PLC, Ltd, sole trader, charity, local authority)			Sole traders and private companies may pose a higher risk.
Date organisation established (if known)			Younger organisations may pose a higher risk.
Type(s) of placement/ practice learning proposed			Longer placements may

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(eg internship, vacation, sandwich)			pose a higher risk.
Has the organisation been used before to provide placements / practice learning? If so when?			New organisations may pose a higher risk.
Location (Country)			International locations would be deemed high risk.
Does the organisation have a written health and safety policy?			Lack of a policy may pose a higher risk.
Does the organisation have employers and public liability insurance and does that cover any liability incurred by a student as a result of his /her duties on placement?			Lack of insurance would pose a higher risk.

3. ACTION TO MITIGATE AGAINST HIGH RISK

Any high risk identified does not mean that an organisation cannot be used, but it indicates that the School needs to ensure that procedures are put in place to mitigate against the risk and show that reasonable action is being taken to protect the learning experience of the student(s) placed there. This action may take the form of a visit to the organisation prior to approval, more regular contact with the organisation, more regular contact/ visits with the student etc.

Please record any agreed actions to be implemented to mitigate against any high risk identified in section 2.	
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Form **completed** by:

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Name

School/Dept/Partner

Signature

Form **approved** by:

Name

School/Dept/Partner

Signature

When you have completed this form please forward it to j.r.cataldo@staffs.ac.uk and the information will be uploaded onto

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