



# Work-based and Placement Learning Policy

## Purpose of Policy

This Work-based and Placement Learning (WBPL) policy has been developed to ensure that:

- The academic standards of the University of Edinburgh are maintained.
- Pastoral and academic support has been considered and roles and responsibilities are clear.
- Procedures are in place for the approval and ongoing monitoring of WBPL arrangements.
- The legal responsibilities of the University of Edinburgh have been met.

## Overview

The University of Edinburgh recognises the benefits of WBPL to students, particularly in providing opportunities to gain essential skills for employment and to put learning into practice. All WBPL arrangements must be driven academically but be underpinned by support mechanisms to ensure that the aims of widening educational opportunities and broadening work-based perspectives are met.

## Scope: Mandatory Policy

The policy applies to all Colleges and Schools involved with Work-based Learning and Placements as a compulsory element of the degree programme, including undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes, and postgraduate research programmes that are credit-bearing and may be subject to formal assessment methods. The policy **does not** cover less formal arrangements or internships that do not constitute a compulsory part of the students' programme of study and which the student may arrange by him/herself and undertake during term or vacation time. The requirements of relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory bodies will take precedence over the University's practice and expected standards in the management of WBPL.

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## Document control

Dates	Approved:	Starts:	Equality impact assessment:	Amendments:	Next Review:
	28.05.2015	1.8.15	20.5.15	23.4.20, 16.5.22, 18.05.23	2023/24

**Approving authority** Senatus Quality Assurance Committee

**Consultation undertaken** A QAC working group developed a policy and code of practice in 2011/12. These were merged following a desk-based review by Academic Services and subject to QAC approval in May 2015.

**Section responsible** Academic Services

**Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations** Collaborative Provision Framework [www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/governance-strategic-planning/collaborative-activity](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/governance-strategic-planning/collaborative-activity); Health and Safety Guidance Notes for Students on Placements <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/health-safety/guidance/students-young-persons>

**UK Quality Code** [UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance: Work-based Learning](http://www.gaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/work-based-learning)  
<https://www.gaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/work-based-learning>

**Policies superseded by this policy** 2012 Code of Practice Work-based and Placement Learning and Indicators of Sound Practice Work-based and Placement Learning

**Alternative format** If you require this document in an alternative format please email [Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk) or telephone 0131 650 4490.

**Keywords** Work-based Placement Learning, work-based learning, placements



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## 1. Background and definitions

- 1.1 The University recognises that work-based and placement learning (WBPL) is a valuable component of a student's programme of study. Work-based and placement activity exists in a variety of forms which makes it difficult to provide a precise and formal definition.
- 1.2 The QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education core practices for standards and quality contain the expectation that "Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them."
- 1.3 The University recognises that the scale and scope of WBPL can range from full employment within an organisation to conducting a project for an organisation. In view of this, not all elements of this Policy will apply equally to all WBPL contexts, and a degree of judgement must be exercised in applying this Work-based and Placement Learning Policy.
- 1.4 For some programmes (e.g. modern languages) the Year Abroad period may be used as a placement year, but students may be linked to a placement via a host University. Hence, there may not be a clear distinction between Year Abroad and placement. In such cases, colleagues must also consult the Exchange Coordinator Toolkit <https://www.ed.ac.uk/global/go-abroad/staff-toolkit>. Further advice where required is available from the Study and Work Away Service <https://www.ed.ac.uk/global/go-abroad/staff-toolkit/contact-us>

## 2. Key Principles

- 2.1 Work-based and placement learning, wherever and however organised and delivered, should widen learning opportunities without prejudice either to the academic standard of the award being sought or the quality of what is offered to students. Furthermore, the arrangements for assuring quality and standards should be as rigorous, secure and open to scrutiny as those for programmes provided wholly within the institution and through conventional class-based modes of teaching and learning.

## 3. Key roles and responsibilities

- 3.1 A number of key roles may exist in WBPL. Where each of the following roles exist the responsibilities associated with those roles are set out below.
- 3.2 Students are responsible for:
  - Making the practical arrangements relating to the WBPL – e.g. travel arrangements, organising insurance cover, and seeking accommodation.
  - Researching the risks of undertaking WBPL.
  - Maintaining contact with the School's WBPL Co-ordinator during the WBPL period and advising the Co-ordinator of any proposed changes to their arrangements.
  - Informing the School of their address and contact details whilst away from the University.
  - Advising the appropriate WBPL Co-ordinator, at application stage, if they have a disability which will impact on their WBPL.
  - Ensuring that the WBPL Co-ordinator is informed about any Special Circumstances which might impact on the student's academic performance.
  - Attending information/briefing sessions and reading relevant information to keep up-to-date.



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- Providing feedback on the experience when requested to do so and, where necessary, making recommendations for the enhancement of the WBPL activities.

### 3.3 The School/Subject Area is responsible for:

- Ensuring adherence to this Policy
- Establishing and approving WBPL and ensuring its academic legitimacy.
- Agreeing in writing the WBPL arrangements with the host/student.
- Overseeing the development of WBPL in the School.
- Providing information and briefings to students, including informing students of the academic and credit arrangements and the expected learning outcomes relating to the WBPL.
- Advising students of any changes to Programme requirements.
- Checking the current position on visas for students and any conditions for work-based placements
- Maintaining contact with the student, although the student is ultimately responsible for initiating contact.
- Ensuring information about subsequent study arrangements is transmitted to WBPL students to ensure that they are not disadvantaged because of their distance from the University.
- Overseeing the on-going management of WBPL activities.
- Maintaining a School register of WBPL activities.
- Regularly monitoring and reviewing the WBPL arrangements.
- Ensuring staff involved in supporting WBPL activities are appropriately developed and supported in their role.

### 3.4 The WBPL Host is responsible for:

- Agreeing in writing the WBPL arrangements and working in accordance with the agreed arrangements.
- Ensuring WBPL activities provide students with adequate opportunities to achieve the intended learning outcomes and to demonstrate these through assessment.
- Providing support to students during their WBPL activities.
- Ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made to support the participation of disabled students in WBPL activities.
- Informing the University in a timely manner of the need to make changes to arrangements.
- Regularly monitoring and reviewing the WBPL arrangements and reporting to the University.
- Providing a clear point of contact for the WBPL activities.
- Raising concerns, or complaints about any aspect of the arrangement, including an individual student's performance or conduct.
- Making suggestions to the University about how the WBPL activity could be improved.

## 4. Establishing and approving WBPL

- 4.1 School Boards of Studies are ultimately responsible for approving proposed work-based and placement activities through standard course and programme approval processes within their own school. Boards of Studies may ask individual members of the School to take on specific organisational responsibilities, for example, Exchange or Placement Coordinators. Board of Studies curriculum approval should include explicit consideration of the following concerns:



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- a. Suitability of the placement in delivering the learning outcomes of the course and/or programme;
- b. Safety and welfare of students, including health and safety considerations and risk assessment, which needs to be kept under review and not just considered at original approval stage;
- c. The ability of the host to fulfil the University's expectations and legal responsibilities in relation to students in protected characteristic groups, including disabled students, and children and vulnerable adults.
- d. The capability of the School/Subject Area to manage the placement;
- e. Arrangements for the supervision and support of students, e.g. arrangements for Student Advisers/Student Support Teams and Research Supervisors, where relevant;
- f. Arrangements for the assessment of students.

### 5. Risk Assessments

- 5.1 A risk assessment must be carried out, usually by the student or host, and approved by a member of staff. Different types of activity will carry varying degrees and types of risk, and the risk assessment must be appropriate to the risk. For certain placements, e.g. laboratory based placements, it is advisable to issue a pre-placement questionnaire to the host to provide an assessment of the risk and the host's management of the placement. The University's Health and Safety Department provides guidance for students on placements: [http://www.docs.csq.ed.ac.uk/Safety/general/students\\_on\\_placement.pdf](http://www.docs.csq.ed.ac.uk/Safety/general/students_on_placement.pdf)
- 5.2 The University's Health and Safety Department provides also provides guidance and support on conducting risk assessments: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/health-safety/online-resources>
- 5.4 Information on accessible placements is provided by the Student Disability Service. For risk assessments involving disabled students, the Student Disability Service should be contacted for further advice: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-disability-service/staff/supporting-students/accessible-placements>

### 6. Learning outcomes and assessment

- 6.1 WBPL should have clearly defined intended learning outcomes, and these should reflect the intended learning outcomes of the relevant course(s) and programme of study as specified in the relevant Degree Programme Specification.
- 6.2 The nature of the WBPL activities, and the support provided to students, should provide students with adequate opportunities to achieve the intended learning outcomes and to demonstrate these through assessment. Course and programme documentation must provide clear and transparent information on the assessment process and criteria including:
  - how achievement of the intended learning outcomes in the WBPL will be assessed;
  - the division of responsibility for student assessment between the University and the WBPL host;
  - the consequences of failure to complete the placement or failure to achieve the intended learning outcomes within the placement;
  - alternative pathways in the event of failure to secure WBPL.



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6.3 Assessment of the students' learning while on placement will be as set out in the University's assessment regulations:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/taughtassessmentregulations.pdf>

6.4 The University has responsibility to ensure that any marker is competent to undertake the task, is fully aware of the University's Assessment Regulations and the specific marking criteria of the assessment, and the marking is moderated by a member of the University's academic staff.

### 7. Management of WBPL by Schools

7.1 Management of WBPL by Schools should take account of activity that involves students in activities/placements away from the University and also in employer engagement activities that take place in the University.

7.2 An individual within the School should be identified as being responsible for managing each WBPL arrangement. This individual should be competent to do so and should be provided with support and development opportunities to establish and further develop his or her capabilities to manage the arrangements.

### 8. School Register of WBPL Activities

8.1 Schools should maintain a register of all formal and compulsory WBPL activities. This should include details of the WBPL activity, key contacts and signed agreements, where relevant.

### 9. Student Information and Briefing

9.1 All students should be provided with briefing information prior to commencing any WBPL activity. Briefing information should include:

- discussion of planned learning activities, intended learning outcomes and how they will be assessed;
- the risk assessment and recommendations regarding health, safety, welfare and personal insurance cover for the student;
- the student's responsibilities, rights and entitlements in the WBPL setting;
- language and cultural considerations (for international placements);
- accommodation arrangements (where relevant);
- contact information - both with the University and also with relevant local organisation(s) in the WBPL setting. This should include guidance on what to do if they have a concern or complaint during or following the placement;
- student support arrangements;
- any specific or special needs of the individual student e.g. disability, health, dietary, religious, and how these will be accommodated within the placement setting;
- any reasonable adjustments that need to be made to meet the student's disability-related needs.

9.2 Briefing processes should include an opportunity for individual students to discuss any aspect of the WBPL.

### 10. Staff Professional Development



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10.1 University staff and host staff involved in placement activity should be appropriately qualified and should have opportunities to develop their own knowledge and practice.

### 11. Monitoring and Review of WBPL Activities

11.1 Monitoring and review should be carried out using the established processes of School Annual Quality Assurance Reports:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/quality/monitoringandreview/annual-monitoring-review-and-reporting> and periodic Internal Review processes:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/quality/monitoringandreview/internal-review>

11.2 Schools should monitor all WBPL activity on an annual basis. This should include:

- opportunities for feedback from all participants and stakeholders i.e. all students who undertook WBPL. They should be given an opportunity to comment on the WBPL and to suggest any ways in which future placements might be improved;
- University staff associated with the WBPL;
- any relevant other organisations associated with the WBPL.

11.3 The College Quality Assurance Committee will maintain an oversight of monitoring at the College level and QAC will maintain oversight at the institutional level and, with the support of the Institute for Academic Development, will disseminate reported case studies of good practice.