



Risk Management of Student Placements

Overall Guidance

PRSG5.8		WELLBEING, SAFETY AND HEALTH MANAGEMENT SYSTEM					
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Overall Guidance on Risk Management of Student Placements

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for you if you are arranging, organising or coordinating a placement activity on behalf of the University. This would usually be the Placement Coordinator or Academic Tutor. Placements can in reality be organised by the student or by a member of staff; however the process remains the same – the Head of School must nominate an Academic Tutor and a Placement Coordinator who will follow the process set out below. Final sign off and approval of placements should be by the Head of School or their delegated nominee.

What are Placements?

A Placement is a period of University approved work or vocational experience that is undertaken by an undergraduate or postgraduate student whilst enrolled at the University. This could be either as part of their academic studies, or as a period of work or vocational experience that is organised or managed by the University. The placement may be paid or unpaid and either in the UK or abroad.

During the placement period direct supervision for the student (including that for health and safety) is transferred to a third party organisation and the Student is considered to be an employee of the Placement Provider for the time they are on Placement. Examples of Placement Providers include the NHS, IBM, Shell, Marks and Spencer as well as small independent organisations.

Examples of placements may include industrial placements, sandwich placements, medical electives, teaching assistantships, summer internships (e.g. through the Careers Centre), internal internships (carried out within the University) and voluntary work (e.g. through an Access and Community Engagement (ACE) programme).

What is not covered:

- Periods of study at another institution either in the UK or abroad;
- Periods of specific voluntary work such as “V Volunteering” organised through ACE and the Student Union;
- Programmes such as the [Leeds for Life Foundation](#)
- Fieldwork studies
- Staff sabbaticals or staff working at another institution or;
- Anyone undertaking a placement or period of ‘work experience’ at the University of Leeds from another organisation – including School, Colleges and other Universities.

In some cases a slightly different approach is taken when an outside professional body is also involved. Speak to your Health and Safety Manager if you are dealing with teacher training, NHS, (healthcare, medical or dental) social work or counselling placements or have any specific questions.

Title:	Risk Management of Student Placements: Overall Guidance - PDF	Number:	PRSG 5.8	Issue date:	01/11	Page Number	Page 2 of 7
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Guidance for Implementation

Introduction

The University has adopted the principles of the UCEA Health and Safety Guidance for the Placement of Higher Education Students.

This guidance is part of a suite of documents that make up the Protocol on *the “Risk Management of Student Placements*. These include the Standard which sets out the University’s expectations from staff and students; and the Roles and Required Actions which explain what each role-holder needs to do to achieve the Standard. This guidance outlines one way of achieving the Standard, however it is generic and written for use across all faculties and services and may therefore need some local translation. Speak to your Health and Safety Manager about how to translate this into local instructions that are relevant to your own area. Links to all the documents cited in this document, along with contact details for your Health and Safety Manager, can be found on the Health and Safety Services website at www.leeds.ac.uk/safety.

Placement Risk Management Process

- The University has adopted a risk management-based process which examines any known or immediate hazards and risks associated with each placement, (for example working on a construction site, in a laboratory or in a war zone).
- This process allows the identification of appropriate controls to reduce these risks or identify where further information may be needed prior to approval.
- **The University does not expect members of staff to carry out written formal risk assessments for the activities of another organisation** - this is part of the Placement Provider’s responsibility.
- By considering the risks the University could be expected to be aware of, you can create a risk profile for the placement which allows you on behalf of the University to make an informed decision on the suitability of the placement.
- By completing the ‘Placement Risk Management Action Plan Form’ (referred to as the “action plan” from this point) your time and resources can be more effectively targeted at the higher risk activities rather than as a common approach to every placement.
- This ensures the University fulfils its duty of care obligations to its students.
- In addition the academic requirements of a placement should also be considered; these can be found in the AQST Placement Policy.

Step 1 – Identification and ‘in principle’ approval

Placements can be identified by the student, by a member of staff within the School, or maybe offered as part of a University programme or voluntary scheme, the process remains the same for both.

Prior to starting the overall Risk Management Process, the placement should be approved in principle. This should follow local approval processes related to academic merit and / or a personal development opportunity for the student and be in accordance with the AQST Placement Policy.

It may be appropriate to discuss the obligations laid out in the tripartite agreement at this point to be sure the Placement Provider is aware of them.

Step 2 – Placement Risk Management Planning

Following initial ‘in principle’ approval you should complete the “Action Plan” form. This plan enables you to collate relevant information in one key document; it also helps identify areas to consider relating to risks associated with the placement by assigning a level of risk using the ‘Guide to Risk Profiling’ document. The guide is not an exhaustive list of actions, Schools and Services can add specific local additions to this section. Once complete the plan will also help identify actions required and who is going to carry out these actions e.g. the student, the Placement Provider or the University.

Title:	Risk Management of Student Placements: Overall Guidance - PDF	Number:	PRSG 5.8	Issue date:	01/11	Page Number	Page 3 of 7
--------	---	---------	----------	-------------	-------	-------------	-------------

The plan should be kept by the Placement Coordinator with the Tripartite Agreement and any other key information relating to the placement (e.g. information on insurance, risk assessments from the Placement Provider, information on activities to be undertaken).

Complete the Action Plan Form

The following alphabetised sections (A-K) relate to the equivalent sections on the Action Plan form.

General Information Section

This section is for general details of the placement, including information on the contact details for the student while on placement, their home School and Faculty as well as a brief outline of the placement itself.

Section A: Tripartite Agreement

Once the Tripartite Agreement has been signed and returned by the Placement Provider, it must then be signed by the student and the Head of School nominated member of staff on behalf of the University (usually the Academic Tutor). You should file it with the Action Plan form and other documentation.

This agreement forms an integral part of the approval process. It clearly lays out the responsibilities of the three parties involved in the Placement - the Placement Provider, the University and the student. Clarification of the roles and responsibilities expected for health and safety is important to ensure that there is no misunderstanding during the placement.

The Tripartite Agreement is the University's approved contractual agreement; this must be used unless there is an alternative formally approved University agreement. It is recognised that not all placements are suitable to this agreement; if you therefore feel an alteration is needed then this should be discussed and agreed with your Health and Safety Manager and the legal team.

This agreement must be signed by all three parties and returned to the Placement Coordinator before the placement begins. If this does not happen, the placement cannot go ahead.

Section B: Specific Placement information

As you complete the Action Plan form you may decide you need more information from the Placement Provider. This may include information on the work activities to be undertaken or copies of risk assessments for higher risk activities; for further support with this or advice on whether and activity is high risk, contact your Health and Safety Manager.

When you contact the Placement Provider you should ensure that the key learning outcomes and objectives of the placement are clear. The University's policies on these can be found in the AQST document).

If the placement is for a student working for a French company in France then you will need to complete a University approved 'Convention de Stage' agreement instead of the Tripartite Agreement. This is also sometimes required for placements in Italy and Spain.

Sections C- E: Other Information

If you know the Placement Provider has been used in the past then you should consider whether health and safety has been reviewed. This is particularly important if there have been any concerns surrounding their health and safety practices, or if any accidents or 'near misses' have occurred. Depending on the nature of any concerns then the follow-up to these will be different – speak to your Health and Safety Manager if you have any concerns.

For placements that have higher risk activities you will need to determine whether the Placement Provider has access to 'in-house' professional health and safety advice. For further support and guidance contact your Health and Safety Manager.

Title:	Risk Management of Student Placements: Overall Guidance - PDF	Number:	PRSG 5.8	Issue date:	01/11	Page Number	Page 4 of 7
--------	--	---------	----------	-------------	-------	----------------	-------------

Placement Risk Profiling

When you 'risk profile' the placement, you focus on six factors which help you to make an informed decision as to whether the risks associated with the placement are acceptable. You should consider and assess each of these factors as high, medium or low risk, using the risk profile guide which also offers some advice as to actions you should take.

We do not expect members of staff to carry out written formal risk assessments for the activities of another organisation; this is part of the Placement Provider's responsibility. This guidance is generic in approach and as such is not exhaustive, there may be other specific things that may need considering in specialised fields. However in most cases "risk profiling" will be straightforward. If you have any concerns or questions when making these decisions then speak to your Health and Safety Manager.

The six factors are:

Section F: Work

This relates to the activities that will be carried out by the student during the placement, including hazards that the student may be exposed to during the work activities. The level of appropriate named supervision is of particular importance within this section.

Section G: Travel and Transportation

Travel can be a risk, this may not just involve travel during / or for the placement activities but in some circumstances it may be important to consider travel to and from the place of work.

Section H: Location and / or Region

Location can have a significant bearing on the level of risk, particularly if there is unfamiliarity with the country, the culture (specifically around disability, gender or sexual orientation) or the language. The level of risk will be dependent on the student's familiarity with a foreign country and their knowledge of the language and culture. This may be as applicable to an overseas student being placed in a UK organisation as a UK student being placed in an overseas organisation. Where there are concerns support is available from the following University websites: - <http://www.equality.leeds.ac.uk/>, <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/lsm/>, <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/ssn/>, <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/studentcounselling/>.

Section I: General / Environmental Health

This section is concerned with the environmental conditions, accommodation and food /drink. These could include extremes of temperature, endemic illnesses for which prophylactic treatment is required and access to drinking water. It may also be important to consider availability of medication or specific dietary requirements for individual students.

Section J: Individual Student

Each student will have different needs due to their health (including mental health), knowledge, skills and experience. In some cases this may require specific adjustments to ensure the student has an equitable experience on placement to other students. Where there are concerns support is available from the following University websites: (<http://www.equality.leeds.ac.uk/>, <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/lsm/>, <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/ssn/>, <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/studentcounselling/>).

Section K: Insurance Limitation

Insurance plays an important part in the approval of a placement – see the further notes on the Insurance Officer's webpages on the University website.

Title:	Risk Management of Student Placements: Overall Guidance - PDF	Number:	PRSG 5.8	Issue date:	01/11	Page Number	Page 5 of 7
--------	--	---------	----------	-------------	-------	----------------	-------------

Step 3 – Send the Tripartite Agreement to the Placement Provider

Following initial agreement ‘in principle’ from the Placement Provider the Tripartite Agreement should be sent to them, requesting that they sign and return it to you as soon as possible. At this stage it is important to discuss with them what the University expects from them both academically and for health and safety and let them know that you may need further information later.

N.B. this step can be carried out in parallel to Step 2, discussions about expectation could also be had before this Step and may form part of the “in principle agreement”.

The Tripartite Agreement is the pivotal document in the whole process and is the minimum requirement in the University’s expectation.

Step 4 – Signing and approving the Placement Risk Management Action Plan

Once completed, the “Action Plan” should be signed off by the Head of School or their delegated nominee. The “Action Plan” should be kept along with the Tripartite Agreement and any other key information relating to the placement (e.g. information on insurance, risk assessments from the Placement Provider and information on the activities to be undertaken).

Approving the Placement and Tolerability of Risk

Once you have completed all the actions in the “Action Plan”, the Academic Tutor needs to decide if the level of risk is at an acceptable level. If either you have not completed all the identified actions in the “Action Plan”, or if the Academic Tutor does not think that the level of risk is acceptable, then you should discuss the placement with your Health and Safety Manager and Head of School. If at this point you deem the risks too high then you will need to take the advice of your Dean and decide whether to escalate a final approval decision to Secretariat.

Copies of the “Action Plan” should be retained within the School, and shared with the student and Placement Provider.

Step 5 – Student Briefing

Prior to a placement you should arrange for the student to be given a full briefing which, in addition to academic specific information required by the AQST policy, should include at least:

- Information specific to their placement - for example copies of the Tripartite Agreement, any other contractual placement paperwork and in some cases information from the Placement Provider.
- General health and safety issues - the complexity and level of information will depend on the placement, where the placement is to be held and the outcomes of the risk profiling (which you should also include in the briefing). If you need any assistance contact your Health and Safety Manager
- Cultural issues – including personal safety, equality issues such as gender/ sexuality/ disabilities and any location-based issues which could include health and travel
- What to do in an emergency - Key contacts at both at the Placement Provider and the University; and the process for raising any concerns – usually the Placement Coordinator would be the first point of contact.
- Insurance – covering the key points of what may be needed.
- The way in which the briefing is delivered should suit the School or Service and be appropriate to the overall level of risk of the placement. When sending large numbers of students to one Placement Provider it may be worth organising a briefing with a representative of the Placement Provider, to ensure all students get the same information.

Step 6 – Visits Pre-Placement / During Placement

Share the “Action Plan” with the Academic Tutor and they will decide whether or not to make a pre-placement visit or to carry out a visit during the placement based on the level of risk associated with the placement from

Title:	Risk Management of Student Placements: Overall Guidance - PDF	Number:	PRSG 5.8	Issue date:	01/11	Page Number	Page 6 of 7
--------	--	---------	----------	-------------	-------	----------------	-------------

the risk profiling. It should be noted that a visit could be combined with one that is carried out as a requirement of the Academic Policy.

A pre-placement visit would only be necessary where the placement offers a very high risk or where there are significant concerns that would be easier to resolve through a visit. A visit would look at the suitability of the placement from the levels of supervision that are going to be available to the student; what the student is going to be doing and the level of control measures in place for these activities.

Visits during the placement would usually be carried out by an Academic Tutor as they are likely to involve an academic assessment within them; this would also allow the student the opportunity to raise any concerns with regard to health and safety. A visit may also be carried out if a significant concern is raised by the student or Placement Provider and this cannot be resolved without a visit.

N.B. Any visit should only occur following agreement with the Placement Provider.

Process for Raising Concerns and Contingency / Emergency Procedures

A process for Students or the Placement Provider to be able to raise concerns should be developed locally in conjunction with your Health and Safety Manager; this should cover academic concerns, minor concerns about health and safety or other personal issues that the University maybe help to resolve.

In the event that concerns cannot be resolved within the School / Faculty or Service or in an emergency there should be a procedure for escalating the concern and in extreme cases this should feed into the University Critical Incident Management Plan which can be found at <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/cimp>. Speak to your Health and Safety Manager if you have any queries.

Step 7 – Feedback and Review

Once the placement is over you should gain and collate feedback about both the positive and negative aspects (particularly regarding health and safety) from the student and Placement Provider which will support future placements to the Provider. You should record these with the Action Plan form. If you need any assistance contact your Health and Safety Manager.

Title:	Risk Management of Student Placements: Overall Guidance - PDF	Number:	PRSG 5.8	Issue date:	01/11	Page Number	Page 7 of 7
--------	--	---------	----------	-------------	-------	----------------	-------------