

## GUIDANCE NOTE ON PLACEMENT LEARNING

This Guidance Note is intended to provide advice to staff, students and placement providers in regard to student placements. This Guidance Note was approved by the Senate on 2 May 2007 and takes account of the QAA Code of Practice, Section 9: Placement Learning which can be accessed at:  
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section9/PlacementLearning.pdf>

### 1. General Principles

- 1.1 Placement learning is defined by the QAA as “a planned period of learning, normally outside the institution at which the student is enrolled, where the learning outcomes are an intended part of a programme of study. It includes those circumstances where students have arranged their own learning opportunity with a placement provider, with the approval of the institution.”
- 1.2 There are a number of opportunities for placement learning which exist in programmes at the University of Aberdeen. Examples of these include:
- Industrial placements which are an integral part of some programmes;
  - School Experience in the degrees of BEd, BMus and PGDE;
  - An exchange programme such as the ERASMUS scheme administered through a dedicated unit in the Registry and the International Exchange Programme administered by the Student Recruitment and Admissions Service;
  - Placements which form part of postgraduate taught or research programmes.
- 1.3 The University has a key responsibility for ensuring that where a placement is an integral part of a course or programme:
- the relevant responsibilities for placement learning are clearly defined;
  - the intended learning outcomes contribute to the overall aims the programme or course;
  - the assessment of the placement learning is appropriate.

### 2. Institutional Policies and Procedures

- 2.1 The University's procedures for course and programme approval (see section 3 of the Academic Quality Handbook) apply equally to periods of placement learning, where this forms an integral part of a course and/or programme.
- 2.2 In developing any period of placement learning, Schools should take account of:
- The significance of the placement to the student's programme of study;
  - The capability of the placement provider to fulfil the University's expectations and legal responsibilities in regard to the Disability Discrimination Act;
  - The University's Equality and Diversity Strategy;
  - The health, safety and welfare of students;
  - Whether the placement would require students to complete a *Disclosure Scotland* check.

- 2.3 Schools are responsible for ensuring that the organisation and management of placements is clearly defined. Where appropriate, a member of staff should be identified as having responsibility for the placement. Where this is not feasible, the roles and responsibilities of the staff members arranging placements should be clear to both the staff and the students involved. Heads of School should ensure those staff members responsible for arranging and overseeing placements are competent to do so, and that they are provided with appropriate training opportunities (see section 4 below).
- 2.4 Where a placement is identified as requiring students to complete a Disclosure Scotland check, Schools should ensure that this has been completed satisfactorily before the placement period begins. Schools are responsible for ensuring that students complete the correct level of Disclosure checking i.e. basic, standard or enhanced, as required for the planned placement.
- 2.5 Where a placement involves study at another institution, the member of staff responsible should ensure that the curriculum to be followed during the placement is appropriate to the student's programme of study. Any changes to the agreed curriculum must be approved by the member of staff responsible for the placement. The anticipated recognition for successful completion of the placement should also be communicated to the student before the placement period begins.
- 2.6 Schools should ensure that placement providers are aware of their role and responsibilities in the assessment of students, where this is appropriate.
- 2.7 At the end of the placement period, the provider should confirm the successful completion of the placement and return the results for any assessment undertaken by the placement provider. This will be given full academic recognition on the student's return. It is the School's responsibility to ensure that appropriate recognitions are submitted to the Registry for inclusion on the Student Record System.

### **3. Information for Students: Their Rights, Responsibilities and Support**

- 3.1 Schools are responsible for ensuring that students who are participating in periods of placement learning are provided with adequate support and information including clearly setting out what the student may expect before, during and after the placement, together with their rights and responsibilities. Such information should ideally be provided in a briefing meeting and all students should receive this information in written format.
- 3.2 In advance of the placement, Schools should ensure students are informed about:
- the learning outcomes and assessment arrangements for the placement;
  - issues in regard to health, safety and welfare including personal insurance arrangements, as appropriate;
  - their responsibilities, rights and entitlements during the placement;
  - language and cultural issues (in regard to international placements);
  - accommodation arrangements (where applicable);
  - contact details (both at the University and at the placement). This should include guidance on what to do should they have a concern or complaint during or following the placement (see section 6 below);
  - their position during the placement in regard to (i) matriculation arrangements including tuition fees and access to University services during the Placement; (ii) any salary (if applicable); (iii) holiday arrangements;

- any relevant arrangements in regard to a student's individual needs e.g. disability-related needs.

3.3 During the placement, Schools should ensure that:

- regular contact is maintained by telephone and/or e-mail;
- where appropriate, visits are carried out as required;
- any problems notified to them by the student and/or placement provider are dealt with promptly;
- any concerns raised by the placement provider relating to the conduct of the student are dealt with promptly and in line with University procedures;
- appropriate monitoring of the student's progress is undertaken, with a formal record being kept

3.4 Following the placement, Schools should ensure that the student is provided with appropriate guidance to assist their re-integration into University life.

#### **4. Staff Development**

4.1 Heads of School are responsible for ensuring that those overseeing and arranging placement provision are competent to fulfil this role. Staff should be provided with any appropriate training necessary for them to be able to undertake their role.

#### **5. Monitoring and Evaluation**

5.1 Schools should ensure that feedback is gathered from staff and students on the quality and standards of the placements provided. Following review of the feedback received, any appropriate actions identified as being required, should be taken.

5.2 Schools should ensure that appropriate means of gathering feedback from placement providers, about the placement arrangements, are in place. Such feedback may be gathered both formally and informally.

#### **6. Complaints, Discipline and Academic Appeals**

6.1 The University's *Policy on Student Complaints* covers student complaints during a period of placement learning. In investigating a complaint relating to a period of placement learning, input from the placement provider will be sought where this is relevant and appropriate.

6.2 The University's *Code of Practice on Student Discipline* also applies equally to periods of placement learning. In investigating any circumstances which may constitute misconduct by a student occurring during a period of placement learning, the University may consult the placement provider where this is relevant.

6.3 Any Academic Appeal submitted in connection with a period of placement learning will be dealt with in accordance with the University's *Policy on Academic Appeals*. In investigating an appeal relating to a period of placement learning the Head of School concerned should seek input from the placement provider where this is relevant to the appeal.

- 6.4 Schools are responsible for ensuring that students, University staff and placement providers are aware of these policies and how to initiate proceedings under these procedures. In particular, Schools should ensure that placement providers are aware of the procedures to be followed in the event of them having cause to lodge a complaint against a placement student. On receipt of any such complaint the University would deal with the matter following the procedures appropriate to the circumstances of the complaint.

## **7. Non-Progression, Termination of Studies and 'Fitness to Practise'**

- 7.1 In some instances the outcome of, or a student's conduct on, a period of placement learning may lead to a recommendation that their studies be suspended or terminated under the Regulations governing the qualification for which he or she is registered. In such instances proceedings will be conducted in accordance with the policy appropriate to the circumstances and intended qualification. Such recommendations will be considered either by the appropriate Students' Progress Committee or, in the case of students registered for certain degrees in Education and Medicine, the relevant Fitness to Practise Committee.
- 7.2 Where a Head of School is recommending that a student's studies be suspended or terminated as a result of a period of placement learning, appropriate input should be sought from the placement provider.