

Guidance Note, GN022

WORK EXPERIENCE PLACEMENTS FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

Many departments in the University provide work experience placements for students from local schools. The "hands on" nature of the placements can be of great value in enhancing the students' knowledge and understanding and in helping them prepare for the world of work. For health and safety purposes the law regards students participating in work experience as employees of the University. Departments should ensure that students receive health and safety induction training at the start of their placements and appropriate supervision throughout the placements. **Not only does the University wish to ensure that students are not injured or suffer ill health as a result of their placements, we also wish to give them opportunities to experience and appreciate examples of good health and safety practice in the workplace.**

Below is a list of matters which departments should consider when school students are provided with work experience placements in administrative areas. If students are accepted for placements in laboratories there will be a wider range of issues to be addressed.

- 1) It should be clear who will supervise students during their placements and who will deputise during the temporary absence of a supervisor. Supervisors should recognise that school students are likely to need more supervision than adults.
- 2) A student's induction into the department should include the main health and safety dangers in the workplace and the precautions which are in place. Departments should give the student copies of the department's health and safety policy and other relevant documentation however it will never be sufficient for health and safety induction for a student to consist merely of instructions that he/she should read the health and safety documentation. Students must be appraised of the relevant aspects of the department's health and safety arrangements in a much more positive manner. The checklists which are used by departments for the induction of members of staff will also be suitable for the induction of work experience students but departments should take into account that most students are likely to be inexperienced, largely unaware of health and safety matters and physically or mentally immature.
- 3) As well as explaining the department's health and safety arrangements, the induction should emphasise students' personal responsibilities and the importance of following health and safety rules.

- 4) Students should be introduced to key health and safety staff (including the departmental safety adviser) or informed about their names, locations and responsibilities.
- 5) It is important that students are told about any areas to which access is prohibited for health and safety reasons. (For examples, students assigned to a department's main office might be told that they must not enter the department's laboratories.)
- 6) Emergency procedures should be explained including first aid arrangements, the need to report all accidents no matter how small, what to do in event of fire and what to do if the fire alarm sounds including the routes to the assembly points. Any accident involving a student should be reported immediately to the student's school as well as to the University Safety Adviser.
- 7) It should be made clear to students that if they are unsure or concerned about any aspect of their work they should always discuss the matter with their supervisor.

Departments requiring further advice on health and safety induction for school students starting work experience placement should contact the University Safety Adviser.