

GUIDANCE NOTE ON WORK-BASED LEARNING

This Guidance Note is intended to provide advice to staff, students and placement providers in regard to work-based learning.

1. General Principles

1.1 Work-based Learning is defined by the QAA in Section 12 of the Quality Code as:

“This involves learning through work, learning for work and/or learning at work. It consists of authentic structured opportunities for learning which are achieved in a workplace setting or are designed to meet an identified workplace need. This type of learning typically has a dual function of being designed to meet the learning needs of the employees, developing their knowledge, skills and professional behaviours, and also meeting the workforce development needs of the organisation.

Work-based learning is, therefore, learning which is distinguished from work-related or simulated learning activity that has not been formulated or commissioned by, or in partnership with, employers to address a current workforce need.”

1.2 There are a number of opportunities for work-based learning which exist in programmes at the University of Aberdeen. Examples of these include:

- Industrial placements which are an integral part of some programmes such as MSci, degree programmes;
- School Experience in the degrees of MA (Education), BMus and PGDE;
- The Erasmus Programme/Turing Scheme offers funding for students to undertake a work-based project or traineeship abroad, either within the parameters of an existing work-based learning opportunity embedded in a programme, or outside of the programme.
- Placements which form part of postgraduate taught or research programmes
- The Graduate Apprenticeship programme in Civil Engineering (note this is no longer open to new entrants)

1.3 The University has a key responsibility for ensuring that where work-based learning is an integral part of a course or programme:

- the relevant responsibilities for work-based learning are clearly defined;
- the intended learning outcomes contribute to the overall aims the programme or course;
- the assessment of the work-based learning is appropriate.

2. Institutional Policies and Procedures

2.1 The University’s procedures for course and programme approval (see [Academic Quality Handbook](#)) apply equally to periods of work-based learning, where this forms an integral part of a course and/or programme.

2.2 In developing any period of work-based learning, Schools should take account of:

- The significance of the work-based learning to the student’s programme of study;

- The capability of the work-based learning provider to fulfil the University's expectations and legal responsibilities in regard to the Equality Act 2010;
- The University's [Commitments in terms of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#);
- The health, safety and welfare of students;
- The capability of the work-based learning provider to make relevant arrangements in regard to a student's individual needs (e.g., disability-related needs).
- Whether the work-based learning would require students to complete a [Protection of Vulnerable Groups](#) check.

2.3 Schools are responsible for ensuring that the organisation and management of work-based learning is clearly defined. Where appropriate, a member of staff should be identified as having responsibility for the work-based learning. Where this is not feasible, the roles and responsibilities of the staff members arranging the work-based learning should be clear to both the staff and the students involved. Heads of School should ensure those staff members responsible for arranging and overseeing work-based learning are competent to do so, and that they are provided with appropriate training opportunities (see section 4 below).

2.4 Where work-based learning is identified as requiring students to complete a Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) check, Schools should ensure that this has been completed satisfactorily before the work-based learning period begins. Schools are responsible for ensuring that students complete the correct level of (PVG) checking (i.e., basic, standard or enhanced) as required for the planned work-based learning.

2.5 Where work-based learning 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 work-based learning providers are aware of their role and responsibilities in the assessment of students, where this is appropriate.

2.7 At the end of the work-based learning period, the provider should confirm the successful completion of the period of work-based learning and return the results for any assessment undertaken by the work-based learning 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. Results for assessments undertaken by the University should be inputted to the Student Record System (SRS) in line with the usual processes for this as specified in paragraphs 2.8 -2.10 of the [rules for the conduct of assessment](#) within the Academic Quality Handbook

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

3.1 Schools are responsible for ensuring that students who are participating in periods of work-based learning are provided with adequate support and information including clearly setting out what the student may expect before, during and after the work-based learning opportunity, together with their rights and responsibilities. This should include *ongoing personal tutor and pastoral support (including from Student Support)*. Such information should ideally be provided in a briefing meeting and all students should receive this information in written format (e.g., via course handbooks).

3.2 In advance of work-based learning, Schools should ensure students are informed about:

- the learning outcomes and assessment arrangements;
- issues in regard to health, safety and welfare including personal insurance arrangements, as appropriate;
- their responsibilities, rights and entitlements during their work-based learning activity;
- language and cultural considerations (in regard to international work-based learning);
- accommodation arrangements (where applicable);
- contact details (both at the University and at the work-based learning provider). This should include guidance on what to do should they have a concern or complaint during or following the work-based learning activity (see section 6 below);
- their position during their work-based learning activity in regard to (i) registration arrangements including tuition fees and access to University services during their work-based learning; (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 periods of work-based learning, Schools should ensure that:

- regular contact is maintained by the School, telephone, video call and/or e-mail;
- where appropriate, visits are carried out as required;
- any problems notified to them by the student and/or work-based learning provider are dealt with promptly;
- any concerns raised by the work-based learning 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 work-based learning activity, Schools should ensure that the student is provided with appropriate guidance to aid the transition back into their studies and University life.

4. Staff Development

4.1 Heads of School are responsible for ensuring that those overseeing and arranging work-based learning 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 work-based learning 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 work-based learning providers, about the work-based learning arrangements, are in place. Such feedback may be gathered both formally and informally.

6. Complaints, Discipline and Academic Appeals

6.1 The University's [Complaints Handling Procedure](#) (covers student complaints during a period of work-based learning). In investigating a complaint relating to a period of work-based learning,

input from the work-based learning provider will be sought where this is relevant and appropriate.

- 6.2 The University's *Code of Practice on [Student Discipline \(Academic\)](#)*, , also applies equally to periods of work-based learning. In investigating any circumstances which may constitute misconduct by a student occurring during a period of work-based learning, the University may consult the work-based learning provider where this is relevant.
- 6.3 Any Academic Appeal submitted in connection with a period of work-based learning will be dealt with in accordance with the University's [Policy and Procedures on Student Appeals](#). In investigating an appeal relating to a period of work-based learning the Head of School concerned should seek input from the work-based learning provider where this is relevant to the appeal.
- 6.4 Schools are responsible for ensuring that students, University staff and work-based learning providers are aware of these policies and how to initiate proceedings under these procedures. In particular, Schools should ensure that work-based learning providers are aware of the procedures to be followed in the event of them having cause to lodge a complaint against a work-based learning 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 work-based learning may lead to a recommendation that their studies be suspended or terminated under the Regulations governing the qualification for which they are 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 by either the appropriate Students' Progress Committee or, in the case of students registered for certain degrees, 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 work-based learning, appropriate input should be sought from the work-based learning provider.