



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

POLICY DOCUMENT

Work Placement / Practice Experience Guidelines & Good Practice

Approved by Academic Council 12th April 2007

Version 1.4

1. Introduction

This policy outlines a set of guidelines to support current activities and facilitate the development of future work-placement activities at University College Dublin where learning takes place outside the University in an experiential setting. This activity can refer to professional clinical practice placements, industry based work experience and other professional fieldwork experiences (hereinafter referred to as 'placements' within this document). This policy document is concerned with arrangements made for such placement learning that constitutes a planned and intended part of an academic programme, is assessed by that programme and for which ECTS credit is awarded. This policy shall help ensure parity of practice across the University.

It should be noted that any experiential learning activities that students are required to take as part of a Programme are covered by this policy. For programmes that have yet to be modularised, the role of the Programme Board as set out in this document may be deemed to be fulfilled by the School which hosts the programme. It should be noted that this policy does not cover part-time or full-time paid work undertaken by students under a contract of employment, nor does it cover voluntary work undertaken by students that attracts no modular credits.

2. Context

Professional or experiential learning has been an integral component of a number of programmes at UCD for many years. In the context of a modular credit based system there exists a requirement for an articulated statement of university-wide policy regarding what constitutes a valid work placement, how such placements should be defined, monitored and assessed, the appropriate ECTS credit available for such placements, etc. This document takes account of current practice across the University and draws upon best practice in industry and different professional disciplines.

3. General Principles

This policy establishes a university-wide set of minimum standards and guidelines to be applied to all programmes that award credit for placements.

3.1. Academic and Professional Rationale for Placements

The inclusion of a placement within a programme should have a clearly stated academic and professional purpose. The overall rationale for the placement should be clearly articulated within the programmes' specified learning outcomes. It should easily demonstrate its role in advancing students' assimilation and application of knowledge. The definition of the placement opportunity should make explicit for the student the respective roles and authority of the University and the external agency. This will normally include a clear articulation of the relevant policies governing students' employment status, code of conduct arrangements, any financial arrangements and the applicability of the University's Student Code (Appendix 1).

3.2. Module Design

- The module descriptor shall specify the academic requirements for the placement in terms of the number of credits to be awarded, student workload, attendance requirements, duration of placement, expected learning outcomes and form of assessment used. Grounds for failure and opportunities for remediation of that failure should be set out clearly.
- The module descriptor may be supplemented by a specific placement agreement, drawn up between the University, the student and, where applicable, the placement provider. Specified learning objectives or a placement agreement should be formally agreed with the student prior to or during the first two weeks of the placement.

(The detail of the placement agreement will vary according to the overall purpose of the placement within the programme. For example, where specific learning outcomes are set out in the module descriptor, such as the achievement of specific competencies, there may be no requirement to develop further individualised placement agreements. However, where students on a programme may be going to different settings, an individualised learning contract will be helpful. Such placement agreements should ensure that expectations for achieving the required learning outcomes are explicit and agreed between the programme, the student and the placement provider).

- Additional information such as regulatory information and academic guidelines for external agencies offering placements, agency requirements for Garda clearance, immunisation and health and safety requirements, etc, should be available and referred to within the module and programme descriptor. All relevant additional information should be accessible to students.
- There should be a coherent connection between the number of learning hours expected of the student while on placement and the credit awarded. For professionally accredited programmes, the relationship between duration of placement and the credit should also be in accordance with relevant state regulatory body guidelines, where appropriate.
- Where a programme involves a number of short placements that, on their own, do not equate to the minimum for an undergraduate module, these placements can be combined to form a single module.
- The number of permissible repeats of a work placement/professional experience module should be clearly stated by the Programme Board.
- All placements undertaken as mandatory integral components of a programme must be defined within the context of the modular system (i.e. as a module or a constituent part of a module) and be described within or by an appropriate module descriptor.

3.3. Identification of Placements

- The Programme Board is responsible for verifying that Schools offering placement modules will make an adequate number of suitable placements available to students. Each placement should be able to provide the learning opportunities to enable students to meet the expected learning outcomes
- Where an adequate number of placements (or single placement of adequate duration and challenge) cannot be arranged for the students on a programme, provision should be made for alternative learning activities, such as a project, to demonstrate that the students have broadly met the learning outcomes for the module, provided this is compatible with requirements of the relevant regulatory professional body where such exist.
- . Where a student has a specific access need, the Programme Board should ensure that Schools offering work placement/practice experience modules take responsibility for the

provision of a placement that adequately meets these needs, within the constraints of the placement opportunities available to the School, provided this is compatible with requirements of the relevant regulatory professional body where such exist.

- Where an appropriate placement cannot be arranged for a student with specific access needs, provision should be made for alternative learning activities, such as a project, to demonstrate that the student has broadly met the learning outcomes for the module.
- The Programme Board should verify that Schools offering work placement/practice experience modules will ensure that each placement meets the required standard of support and supervision for the student. Normally this will involve defining and operating a methodology for assessing the suitability of the agency in offering such placements.
- In Programmes where students negotiate the location of their own placement, the programme should ensure that the standards and learning opportunities of that placement are suitable for the student's needs and/or, where relevant, are in accordance with the requirements of the relevant professional body.
- The Programme Board should verify that Schools offering placements will ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to maintain contact with all students during the period of the placement. In the case of overseas placements, specific arrangements should be in place to monitor the effective operation of the placement and to offer support to the student in cases of emergency.

3.4. Orientation of Students

It is the responsibility of the Programme Board to verify that Schools offering placements will ensure that all students are fully briefed and oriented on the purposes of their placement experience, the academic and professional requirements of the placement, their obligations under the University's Student Code, the relevant Health and Safety issues associated with their placement and any other requirements, academic or otherwise, which the Programme Board may specify, or which may be specified by the relevant regulatory professional body. In particular it is expected that the Programme Board will wish to ensure that the student understands the following:

- Prior to the placement, students should be made aware of the person within the practice agency that is their direct supervisor and the lines of authority within which they are required to operate.
- Students should be made aware of the person who will be responsible for assessing their achievement of the specified learning outcomes for the placement.
- Students should be made aware of any relevant codes of practice and/or regulations that are specific to the placement agency at the commencement of the placement. Students are required to comply with such codes.
- Where a programme operates a practice tutor system, involving UCD permanent or contract staff who monitor or visit students on placement, or staff in practice agencies whose duties include the support of students on placement, students should be made aware of the identity of the tutors and the roles of their respective practice supervisors and practice tutors in relation to placements.
- Students should be made aware of the mechanisms for raising complaints or concerns about their placement experience.
- A mechanism should be put in place to allow students to communicate back to the School, or where issues are deemed to be not satisfactorily addressed by the School to the Programme Board, any concerns or complaints about their experience without fear of jeopardising their progress on the placement. Ideally, such concerns should be raised prior to the completion of the final assessment.

- Students need to have clear guidance from their placement supervisor on issues such as attendance, appropriate dress, time-keeping, travel arrangements and other work-place protocols.
- Certain agencies may have specific requirements, such as immunisation requirements. Where such immunisation is provided for students by the programme, but declined by a student, the student needs to be aware of the limitations that this decision may place on them in regard to their placement options. Full records of any vaccinations offered, received and/or declined must be kept by the relevant School.
- Students should be made aware of the general requirements to work and behave in a safe manner as placed upon them by relevant health and safety legislation.
- Students should be aware that it is expected that they will uphold the same standards of conduct during placements as is required of them whilst in attendance at the University, complying with the University's Student Code and its Policy on Dignity and Respect.

3.5. Orientation / Agreements with Placement Providers

All placements will come under a standard UCD contact that will be signed between the University and the placement provider. In addition, it is the responsibility of the Programme Board to verify that Schools offering placements will ensure that placement providers are briefed fully on the University's requirements and any specific placement agreements and/or regulations that relate to the placement. In particular the Programme Board should ensure that:

- There is a clear articulation of the role of the placement supervisor, this may include information about their role in monitoring, managing and assessing students during placement.
- Placement supervisors should be supported by the Programme Board to facilitate them in effectively carrying out their supervisory role. This may involve provision of training of placement supervisors by the University.
- Additional supports may need to be provided to placement supervisors in instances where placement difficulties have arisen.
- Placement supervisors should have a designated point of contact for the University programme, such as the Programme Fieldwork Coordinator.
- Before the start of a placement, the placement provider should clearly outline the health and safety procedures in place in the agency and should specify the health and safety training and equipment that will be given to the student.
- In cases where students receive a payment from the placement agency, it is preferable that such a payment should come in the form of a bursary/stipend and that the student should not become an employee of the company. In cases where students do become company employees, the School should be satisfied that any employment contract offered to students does not reduce the conditions set out in the placement agreement between the University and the placement provider (company). Unless clearly indicated otherwise, any intellectual property created by the student will remain with the placement agency/company where the student becomes an employee of that company.
- Placement supervisors are made aware that all students must receive suitable health and safety induction prior to beginning their placement, or as soon as is practicable thereafter.

3.6. Assessment of Placement

- An appropriate form of assessment methodology should be agreed by the Programme Board and articulated in the module descriptor. Information on the type of award given should be included. Programme Boards must decide whether the placement will carry a specific grade (A-F) relating to performance on the placement or whether an award is made on a pass/fail basis.
- Where placement supervisors are to undertake assessment of students they should be briefed on the precise expected learning outcomes as set down by the Programme Board. These should include an understanding of the nature of the assessment process, which will either verify a student's competency or grade the level of practice performance.
- Grounds for failure of a placement must be made explicit.
- There should be clear articulation of information relating to (a) any opportunity to repeat the placement, or (b) any opportunity to remediate a failure, where that is permitted.
- Regulations relating to an appeal against the failure of a placement must be made explicit in line with the university appeals process.
- Any investigation that may be required to assess problems arising during a placement will be carried out by the institution or agency best placed to undertake such an investigation.

3.7. Review and Monitoring of Placements

- Students and supervisors should be advised of the importance of having agreed regular supervisory sessions during the course of the placement. The purpose of such sessions should be set out explicitly in any briefing documents provided to the supervisor or student.
- For all placements, appropriate written evidence should exist in order that a student's attendance and satisfactory completion of the placement can be verified by the Programme Board.
- The Programme Board should keep the assessment methodology for the placement under review.
- In placements where difficulties have been identified, these difficulties should be ameliorated before the setting is used again.
- In some contexts, to ensure the achievement of specific professional competencies through placement, Programme Boards may wish or need to develop and implement audit mechanisms to ensure that such competencies have been achieved and can continue to be practised in the longer term.

3.8. Obligations of the University and the Placement Agency in respect of the Student

All placements shall come under an overall placement contract drawn up between UCD and the Placement Agency. Such a contract should specify the host institution's obligations to students and to UCD in relation to Health and Safety legislation. This contract will be separate to any individual placement agreement drawn up to deal with students' learning needs, etc.

3.9. Supplementary Guides/Code Subject Specific

Programmes may establish supplementary guidelines to provide detailed information relating to the required learning objectives of a placement. This may include documentation for either the student or supervisor to keep a record of progress during placements.

Personnel

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Version History

Version	Date	Summary of Changes	Changed by
1.0	01-12-06	First draft	BR, EN & LF
1.1	11-01-07	Second draft	BR, EN & LF
1.2	24-01-07	Third draft	BR & LF
1.3	15-02-07	Fourth draft	BR & LF
1.4	12-04-07	Final draft	LF

Consultation and Approvals Plan

Committee/Group	Date		Version	Action	Decision
	Meeting	Circulation			
Questionnaires issued	26-11-06		-		
Questionnaires returned	01-11-06		-		
CWP Advisory Committee Initial Meeting	10-11-06		-	Comment and Discussion	
CWP Advisory Committee 2 nd Meeting	16-11-06		1.0	Discussion and agree framework	
CWP Advisory Committee Final meeting	11-01-07		1.1	Finalise draft	
Academic Council Executive Committee	24-01-07		1.2	Comment	approval in principle minor revisions
Academic Council			1.2	Comment	minor revisions
Legal Advice	07-02-07		1.2	Revise draft v1.1	Legal sections added
UUPB and UGPB	15-02-07 & 27-02-07		1.3	Comment	
Academic Council	30-03-07		1.3	Circulated for comment	Revisions made
Academic Council	12-04-07		1.4	For Approval	Minor revisions APPROVED

Dissemination Plan

Output	Deadline	Dissemination	Responsible

Appendix 1:

Extract from the UCD Student Code dealing with Student Conduct on Work Placements

http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/student_code.pdf

Section 4. Student Conduct on Work Placements

Where students, as part of their academic programmes, obtain professional instruction or are placed for training, professional experience or work experience at a school, hospital, farm, company, professional practice or other workplace (referred to below as "the institution"), they should observe the following code of conduct:

- Students should conduct themselves in such a way as to reflect credit on the University and its students and not to bring the University or the institution into disrepute.
- Students should conduct themselves in such a way as not to bring the University into disrepute with the institution.
- Students should respect the staff, the property and the activities of the institution as they would the staff, the property and the activities of the University; conduct which would constitute a breach of this code if directed towards the staff, property or activities of the University shall be considered a breach of the code if directed towards the staff, property or activities of the institution, and section 5 of this code shall apply in relation to damage to the institution's property as if it were the University's property.
- Students should acquaint themselves with any traditions, codes of conduct or internal regulations of the institution and should comply with such traditions, regulations or codes of conduct.
- Students should, if eligible, apply for membership of any professional body relating to the profession for which they are studying, and should conduct themselves within the general ethics of the profession and comply with any professional guidelines in so far as they are applicable to students.
- Students should comply with the reasonable and lawful instruction of their supervisors
- Students should comply with any disciplinary procedures or processes of the institution or of the profession for which they are studying and shall be liable to any penalty which may be imposed following due process.
- For the purpose of enforcing this code, the University shall be entitled, but shall not be obliged, to investigate any complaint against a student arising from any alleged misconduct while on placement or any alleged failure to comply with an institution's traditions, regulations or codes of conduct and, following the appropriate disciplinary procedures, the University may impose a penalty in respect of such misconduct or failure to comply with an institution's traditions, regulations or code of conduct as a breach of the Student Code.