

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

TEACHING COMMITTEE

Placement Learning and Study Abroad

PART ONE: Policy Statement

- 1 This Policy Statement covers all forms of work-based placements, whether in the UK or abroad, and periods of study spent at higher education institutions outside the UK, where these form part of University of York programmes of study.
The Policy Statement (part one) is accompanied by the following:
 - part two: the QAA *Code of Practice on Work-based and placement learning* (Sept 2007)
 - part three: a statement of the support available to students whilst on placement or studying abroad
 - part four: a statement regarding responsibilities relating to, and information available on, the Worldwide Exchange programme and Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) Erasmus exchange schemes
 - part five: a document outlining existing good practice relating to placements and studying abroad.
- 2 Study abroad and placements can contribute directly to the objectives of the University Plan by providing students with valuable opportunities for the development of skills and personal qualities, as well as providing specialised academic opportunities. Departments are encouraged to provide students with opportunities to undertake placements and study abroad.
- 3 The University endorses the QAA Code of Practice on Work-based and placement learning (see Part Two) and expects departments to ensure that all placement arrangements follow these guidelines and draw on relevant good practice. The policy provides supplementary information based on university practice.
- 4 The University is conscious that placements and study abroad opportunities operate most successfully where there is a good relationship with the placement provider or study abroad partner. It welcomes the opportunities that placements and study abroad provide to work in partnership with a wide variety of organisations, including employers and other educational establishments. In this context, it is conscious that placement providers, smaller companies in particular, may be deterred from offering opportunities to students if procedures are perceived

to be bureaucratic. Departments may therefore wish to customise their approach, with assistance from the Careers Service, so that it is appropriate for the scale of operation of the placement provider, whilst nevertheless ensuring that the requirements set out in the *QAA Code of Practice* are met.

- 5 Departments should ensure that placement providers are offered useful, timely and concise information including expectations and responsibilities before, during and after the placement takes place. Departments should be confident of the proficiency of the provider staff involved in the support of the placement and that the learning opportunities provided by them are appropriate.
- 6 The University is responsible for academic standards and the quality of placements and for ensuring that placements provide adequate opportunities for the intended learning outcomes to be achieved. Where study abroad and placements are an integral part of a programme of study, whether optional or compulsory, departments should ensure that the overall programme outcomes include appropriate outcomes relating to the period of study abroad and/or the placement and that these are appropriately assessed with marks incorporated into the final degree classification as appropriate (see below). These outcomes should be reflected in the relevant programme specification and programme documentation provided to students.
- 7 Appropriate references to placements and study abroad should also be included in the departmental *Written Statement of Assessment Policies and Practices*. Brief guidance on assessment of study away from York is available in the University's *Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback* (section 4.12). Appropriate use should be made of external examiners in scrutinising marks gained whilst on placement or studying abroad.
- 8 When introducing or reviewing periods of study abroad/placements, departments should refer to the *QAA Code of Practice*. In reviewing existing provision regarding study abroad and placements, a number of examples of good practice have been identified within the University (see Part 5). It is intended that these examples will provide some ideas for enhancing provision where appropriate. Placement and study abroad should also be monitored through the University's regular quality assurance procedures (Annual Programme Review and Periodic Review).
- 9 Departments should provide students with appropriate and timely information, support and guidance prior to, during and after their placement/study abroad (e.g. through a placement handbook). This should include information on students' rights and responsibilities during placement/study abroad including the complaints process. Details of support services available to students whilst studying abroad/on placement are attached. The availability of these services is stated in the *Student Support Services Handbook*, a copy of which all students receive. Departments

should make reference to the availability of these services in relevant documentation, along with information on where students can find support locally whilst on placement or studying abroad. Departments should also support students if the placement circumstances change and s/he is no longer able to achieve the assessed outcomes in an agreed setting.

- 10 Particular consideration should be given to students with special needs when arranging placements or study abroad. Students and placement providers or study abroad partners will need clear information on needs and how or whether those needs can be met.
- 11 In addition to the QAA *Code of Practice on Work-based and placement learning*, the following additional sources of information of relevance to study abroad/placements are also available:

Internal

- International Office: Worldwide Exchange scheme (comprehensive guidance on all aspects of the scheme) and the LLP-ERASMUS scheme (detailed guidance on ERASMUS activities). A brief guidance note relating to these study abroad schemes is attached.
 - Opportunities for Study Abroad
<http://www.york.ac.uk/study/study-abroad/>
 - University links with Europe
<http://www.york.ac.uk/study/study-abroad/outgoing/europe/>
 - University Worldwide exchange links
<http://www.york.ac.uk/study/study-abroad/outgoing/rest-of-the-world/>
- Health, Safety and Environment Advisory Services: guidance on health and safety issues, including guidance notes and a checklist on health and safety in relation to placements (not study abroad)
http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/hsas/safetynet/Student%20Placements/student_placements.htm
- Academic Registrar's Office: availability of student services to students on study abroad/placement
<http://www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/academic-registry/>
- The University's Guide to Assessment
<http://www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/registry-services/guide/>
- Careers Service: advice for departments regarding potential employers in relation to work placements; advice for students in preparing applications for work placements
<http://www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/careers/>

External

Various professional bodies produce guidance to assist in the development of placement information. The list below is not exhaustive but provides some links to specific sites which could be of use.

- Association for Sandwich Education and Training (ASET): *A Code of Good Practice for the Operation of the Placement Element of Sandwich Courses in Higher Education* <http://www.asetonline.org/>
- Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Work Based Learning at Middlesex University
<http://www.mdx.ac.uk/aboutus/Schools/iwbl/index.aspx>
- General Social Care Council: Quality assurance benchmark statement and guidance on the monitoring of practice learning opportunities www.gsc.org.uk
- The Higher Education Academy <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/employability>
- Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer: SEEC *Notes for Guidance on Work-Related Learning* www.seec.org.uk
- UKCISA: UK Council for International Student Affairs www.ukcisa.org.uk
- Universities Association for Lifelong Learning Work Based Learning Network
<http://www.uall.ac.uk/aboutuall.aspx>
- Europe Unit Universities UK for information on the Bologna process
www.europeunit.ac.uk

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PART TWO: QAA Code of Practice Precepts

The full Code of Practice on Work-based and Placement Learning, including helpful explanatory notes and guidance on the precepts, is available at

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-Section-9.aspx>

General principles

1

Where work-based or placement learning is part of a programme of study, awarding institutions ensure that its intended learning outcomes are:

- clearly identified
- contribute to the overall and coherent aims of their programme
- are assessed appropriately.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities for academic standards and quality

2

Awarding institutions are responsible for the academic standards of their awards and the quality of provision leading to them, and have in place policies and procedures to ensure that their responsibilities, and those of their partners involved in work-based and placement learning, are clearly identified and met.

Responsibilities of partners

3

Awarding institutions ensure that all partners providing work-based and placement learning opportunities are fully aware of their related and specific responsibilities, and that the learning opportunities provided by them are appropriate.

Responsibilities and entitlements of students

4

Awarding institutions inform students of their specific responsibilities and entitlements relating to their work-based and placement learning.

Information support and guidance

Students

5

Awarding institutions provide students with appropriate and timely information, support and guidance prior to, throughout and following their work-based and placement learning.

Partners

6

Awarding institutions ensure that work-based and placement learning partners are provided with appropriate and timely information prior to, throughout and following the students' work-based and placement learning.

Staff development

7

Awarding institutions ensure that:

- their staff involved in work-based and placement learning are appropriately qualified, resourced and competent to fulfil their role(s)
- where applicable, other educational providers, work-based and placement learning partners have effective measures in place to monitor and assure the proficiency of their staff involved in the support of the relevant work-based and placement learning.

Monitoring and evaluation

8

Awarding institutions have policies and procedures for securing, monitoring, administering and reviewing work-based and placement learning that are effective and reviewed regularly.

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PART THREE: Statement on support available for students whilst on placement or studying abroad

Departmental Support

Supervisory arrangements in place for students whilst at York should continue in an agreed form during a period abroad/on placement. Students should be encouraged to keep in contact with their placement/academic supervisors by email/telephone/letter/fax and agreement reached with the student before departure on any requirements regarding the frequency of communications. These arrangements should be supplemented by the role of the exchange/placement co-ordinator where appropriate.

Support from University Services

The following University services are able to provide advice by one or more of email/telephone/letter/fax to students during a period of study abroad/placement:

- Accommodation Office
- Careers Service (dedicated Officer to support work-based learning)
- College welfare team (full-time students and part-time students who have opted for college membership)
- Disability Services
- Equality and Diversity Office
- Finance Department
- Open Door Team
- Registry Services
- Students' Union, Graduate Students' Association and other student organisations such as Nightline
- Student Financial Support Unit
- Student Support Office
- Study Abroad Office

In addition, a considerable amount of information and advice is available online - see Student Support Services at <http://www.york.ac.uk/student-support-services/>.

Other sources of support

Students participating in study abroad and placement activities should be provided with details of locally available support. In the case of placements and the LLP Erasmus scheme, this is the responsibility of academic departments. In the case of the Worldwide Exchange scheme, this is the responsibility of the Study Abroad Office. Students should be reminded of the help potentially available from national organisations (e.g., Citizen's Advice Bureau, Samaritans), as outlined in the core section of the Supervisors' Handbook.

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PART FOUR: GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE WORLDWIDE EXCHANGE SCHEME AND THE LLP-ERASMUS SCHEME

While both the Worldwide exchange scheme and the LLP-ERASMUS exchange scheme provide a framework for student mobility, their management within the University is quite distinct. The Worldwide exchange scheme is managed centrally by the Scheme Coordinator, who is based in the International Office. Management of the ERASMUS scheme is shared by the Institutional Erasmus Coordinator, who is based in the Study Abroad Office and Departmental Erasmus Coordinators who are based in each of the participating departments.

Worldwide exchange scheme

The University has established exchange agreements with a number of partner institutions in North America, Asia and Australia and the opportunities provided by these agreements are potentially open to all undergraduate students not in the first or final year of their degree (unless a specific agreement has been arranged by the Department). The division of responsibilities within this scheme is as follows:

The Scheme Coordinator (in the Study Abroad Office) has responsibility for:

- Promoting the scheme within the university and to prospective students at Open Days
- Providing students with information and resources on the International Office web pages
- Organising the selection process conducted by the Worldwide Exchange Interview Panel
- Informing the applicants, departments and the Registrar's and Secretary's Office of the outcome of the selection process
- Liaising between the host campuses and York applicants
- Assisting students with their applications to the host campus, housing matters and course enrolments
- Supplying guidance on visa applications
- Conducting a comprehensive pre-departure briefing, supplemented by written notes, for which students are asked to sign an acknowledgement slip
- Highlighting to both students and their departments the academic requirements of each host campus and how these conform to the requirements of a York degree. Students and their departments are given written guidance on this, in which the conditions of the University's 'Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback' section 4.12 (relating to the treatment of marks from the scheme) are outlined
- Communicating as necessary with relevant University Offices and LEAs;

- Receiving and circulating grades and transcripts
- Maintaining contact with students while they are on exchange
- Conducting a 'debriefing' session on their return

Departments (through Supervisors, Boards of Studies and Boards of Examiners) have responsibility for:

- Making recommendations regarding the suitability of candidates for the exchange
- Agreeing an appropriate work programme with students before departure and approving any necessary subsequent changes
- Maintaining regular contact (in the main through email) with their students, in the interests of both personal and academic welfare
- Monitoring students' progress through course reports and transcripts from the host institution
- Ensuring that students receive appropriate departmental information relating to their returning year of study
- Converting host university grades into a York mark for the purposes of calculating the final degree classification

LLP-ERASMUS exchange scheme

Within the University, departments may establish student study or work placement links with eligible European institutions / organisations wherever they feel that such a link is a) compatible with the academic aims of their department, b) can enhance the experience of their students and c) is likely to be a genuinely reciprocal exchange (study placements only).

Work placements can now be established under the Erasmus programme (previously under the Leonardo scheme). These links do not have to be reciprocal. Placement partnerships can be formalised if it is likely that an organisation will be used for work placements for several years but placements can also be arranged by an individual student with departmental approval.

European and national ERASMUS agencies require institutions to appoint an Institutional Coordinator, whose role is to ensure that any ERASMUS activity within the institution adheres to the Contract between the institution and the European Commission, and to bid for and disburse ERASMUS funds. The University's Institutional Coordinator is based in the International Office. The division of duties within this scheme is as follows:

Each department, through its Departmental Coordinator, is responsible for activities, which are specific to its exchange activity, including:

- Establishing, renewing and terminating agreements with the advice of the Institutional Coordinator
- Promoting opportunities within the department and counselling interested students
- Receiving, distributing and submitting application forms to the partner institution / placement organisation
- Advising students on language preparation, module choices / placement outcomes and credit transfer arrangements
- Agreeing an appropriate study / work programme with students before departure and approving any necessary subsequent changes
- Providing a reasonable level of information on accommodation, support services and any pertinent health and safety issues at the partner institution / organisation
- Maintaining regular contact (in the main through email) with their students, in the interests of both personal and academic welfare
- Monitoring students' progress through regular reports and transcripts from the host institution and where necessary by site visits (particularly for work placement students)
- Ensuring that students receive appropriate departmental information relating to their returning year of study
- Converting grades from the host institution into a York mark for the purposes of calculating the final degree classification
- Ensuring that adequate records are kept in order to facilitate a handover to a successor.

The Institutional Coordinator (in the Study Abroad Office) is responsible for activities, which are common to all ERASMUS exchanges, including:

- Promoting the scheme within the university and to prospective students at Open Days
- Signing new and renewed bilateral agreements
- Ensuring that mobility activity complies with the Contract
- Advising departments on ERASMUS rules and giving verbal or written guidance on the establishment of new links
- Bidding for and disbursing ERASMUS funds
- Collecting data on mobility
- Reporting to the ERASMUS agencies
- Conducting a comprehensive pre-departure briefing, supplemented by written notes
- Distributing standard forms such as ERASMUS grant applications and Learning / Training Agreements

- Conducting an annual meeting for Departmental Coordinators to brief them on ERASMUS scheme changes and discuss topics relevant to the departments at the time. New Departmental Coordinators are invited to meet with the Institutional Coordinator for induction.
- Issuing a general reminder to students on the importance of making insurance arrangements (University insurance is available to all students on work / study placements)
- Hosting site visits and audits by the ERASMUS agencies
- Retaining records for five years

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PART FIVE: Existing Good Practice

These examples of good practice are taken from different departments across the University and reflect a wide variety of activities. Some of the examples may be appropriate only in particular circumstances e.g., where placements are organised on a large scale.

Organisation and management

- The appointment of placement / study abroad (e.g. Erasmus) co-ordinators who have a specific role in relation to placement/study abroad students (e.g. regarding the provision of advice, visiting students whilst on placement and so forth). In some cases, students are also given an 'out-of-hours' contact number in case of emergency.
- The use of a standard 'partnership agreement' as a framework for shared responsibilities between the Department, the placement provider and the student (Health Sciences). The production of a newsletter for placement providers (Health Sciences).
- The 'pairing' of experienced and less-experienced staff for the supervision of placement projects (Electronics).
- The use of feedback questionnaires for placement providers.

Communication with students and the provision of information

- The use of on-line resources to support students. For example, providing on-line guidance notes, and a website on which placement students can post comments. This latter example has been used by one department (Biology) for students on placements to post their 'first impressions' during the first few weeks. It provides a useful resource for students going on placement the following year, as well as providing an additional opportunity to identify and resolve problems. The Study Abroad Office now provide forms, briefing notes and resource links online for students to access whilst they are abroad
- Keep students in touch with York during their period away through, e.g., copies of the University Magazine, Christmas cards, emails about University and/or departmental news etc.
- Asking placement students to submit weekly email reports. This provides York staff with a good indication of how things are going on a regular basis.

- The provision of 'open letters' in the department, from returning year abroad students, as information for students studying abroad the following year (Language and Linguistics)
- The use of 'learning agreements' with students (Chemistry).

Assessment of study abroad/placements

- Assessment of the report produced on work placement carried out by York academic staff (double-marked).
- A proportion of the overall mark for a year in industry based on a grade provided by the placement supervisor, in relation to explicit criteria.
- Use of a logbook during placement to record progress and for subsequent evaluation.

Student Support

- Identification of a personal supervisor at the partner institution, to provide a clear point of contact for the student.
- Assistance to the student in identifying potential placement opportunities and in structuring an effective employer application
- Agreement with the partner institution that they will provide students with assistance in finding accommodation.
- Agreement with the partner institution that they will provide appropriate language tuition (in addition to that already provided at York before departure).
- Consolidation and recognition of employability skills arising from a placement through reflective review of experience

Other information

Departments with programmes involving industrial/work-based placements: Biology; Chemistry; Computer Science; Electronics; Mathematics (MRes only).

Departments with programmes involving placements for professional practice: Education (PGCE only); Health Sciences (nursing and midwifery programmes); HYMS; Language and Linguistics (Comenius and British Council Assistantships); Social Work.