

Lancaster University Placements Policy
managing and supporting university facilitated work placements

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Policy Statement:

Lancaster University recognises the value of well-managed, work-based placements in enriching the learning experience of our students. It is the policy of the University to encourage the provision of such placements where there will be positive outcomes for students, placement providers and the University itself.

Policy Objectives:

This policy is designed to offer staff responsible for organising and facilitating work placements the structure on which to consider the creation, implementation and management of a placement scheme in their department, section or faculty.

Placements should enable our students to further develop subject specific knowledge and skills such as critical and reflective thinking, self-awareness, career planning, problem solving, creativity, team working, commercial awareness and communication. It is crucial that all staff involved in supporting, supervising and managing placements are clear about the approvals process for these placements. While there is an understandable focus on the health and safety aspects, staff also need to ensure that a proposed placement aligns with a student's programme of study and supports their learning.

This policy should be referenced during any work placement scheme managed or supported by Lancaster University staff.

1 Background:

The Wilson Review 2012 and the University Strategic Plan for 2020 encourage the development of opportunities for students to gain from work placements. Taking a placement allows students to experience what it is like to work in the type of organisation in which they might aspire to work when they graduate. It offers them the opportunity to work at graduate level within an organisation while having both academic and pastoral support from Lancaster University before, during and after the placement.

The QAA Quality Code for Higher Education - Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others - sets out expectations about managing the delivery of work based learning opportunities. In accordance with the Code the University takes responsibility for the quality of these learning opportunities, including placements, irrespective of where they are delivered or who provides them. The University must ensure that arrangements for placements are implemented and managed effectively. This includes establishing systems to manage information for placements practice including evaluation, monitoring, quality assurance and risk compliance in the UK and internationally.

2 Definitions:

- a) **Work placements** are usually part of credit-bearing modules, are undertaken as an integral part of a programme and are usually hosted by a third party outside the University in a professional working environment which can be in the private, public or third sector.
- b) **The placement provider** is any third party who provides the placement. Direct supervision of the student is passed to the placement provider during the period of time that constitutes the placement.
- c) **The placement organiser** is a member of University staff to whom authority is devolved for authorising placement of students with placement providers. Their role is to ensure that this policy and other relevant guidelines are applied to each placement.

3 Scope:

- a) This policy and guidance applies to placements at all levels of study.
- b) Any work experience which is outside a formal university placement or internship programme remains outside the scope of this policy. We encourage students to undertake these extracurricular activities. However the University cannot take responsibility for, or provide, travel insurance, personal insurance cover or indemnity, for these activities.
- c) Work placements which do not carry credits may sometimes be facilitated by university staff.
- d) Placements can take place on campus where students are employed by the University. In these situations, the requirements and spirit of this policy apply.
- e) There is no fixed duration for work placements – they may extend over an entire academic year, or a shorter period within the academic year or summer vacation depending on the requirements of the programme.
- f) Work placements can be in the UK or abroad but students should have a comparable experience including working conditions and support received.
- g) It is university policy that, where at all possible, placements should be paid. Exceptions must be approved by the placement organiser, and it is expected that the majority of these would be in the Third Sector.
- h) All placement schemes will have their own detailed processes and guidance for students and staff. Please contact the placement organiser for detail about a particular scheme.

4 Requirements and Expectations:

Lancaster University work placement students can expect:

- a) Sufficient preparation and support.
- b) Written terms and conditions of employment or a contract.
- c) Work that is core business, challenging, interesting and relevant.
- d) Some independence and the opportunity to assume responsibility.
- e) Commitment from the employer to their development.
- f) Supportive, constructive and responsive line management.

Lancaster University requires its students to have a work placement which:

- a) Features a fair recruitment and selection process.
- b) Enhances a student's knowledge while building on their academic studies.
- c) Allows personal and professional development in line with that offered to other staff.
- d) Features regular communication from employers which includes feedback about their progress.
- e) Has been designed with consideration of the needs, abilities and career aspirations of our students.
- f) Where applicable, meets minimum wage legislation.

Lancaster University placement organisers are required to:

- a) Facilitate suitable preparation for the students dependent on their level of study and duration of placement.
- b) Support the placement students through the application process and offer detailed, timely, bespoke feedback.
- c) Offer comprehensive support which might include drop in clinics, 1:1 appointments, and workshops designed for placement students.
- d) Advertise suitable vacancies and encourage employers to register with the University's CRM system.
- e) Maintain direct contact with students while they are on placement.

Lancaster University students are expected to:

- a) Respond promptly to offers of employment.
- b) Act professionally at all times during the recruitment process and, if successful, in the workplace.
- c) Work conscientiously and make a positive contribution to the organisation.
- d) Show commitment to the employer.
- e) Respect current working practices and all health and safety regulations.
- f) Be mindful of employer policies on workplace conduct and confidentiality.

The Employer is responsible for:

- a) Working with the student to complete any University placement documentation, such as the Placement Handbook, Learning Agreement, Health and Safety Checklist and Learning Logs.
- b) Meeting the requirements of Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities and other legal requirements in relation to the student.
- c) Fulfilling the roles and activities agreed including any additionally identified needs of students with a declared disability.
- d) Ensuring the student is inducted into the organisation and is fully aware of the relevant Health and Safety and insurance requirements.
- e) Confirming that the student is covered by the organisation's employer liability insurance.
- f) Providing the student with helpful feedback on their progress and performance.
- g) Participating in the evaluation of the work experience.
- h) Promptly reporting any concerns about the student to the placement organiser.

5 Curriculum alignment:

- a) Every programme of study which includes a placement should have some learning outcomes that refer to the placement.
- b) Placements should have clearly defined intended learning outcomes, and these should reflect the intended learning outcomes of the relevant programme of study.
- c) The nature of the placement, the planned student learning activities, and the support provided to students, should provide students with adequate opportunities to achieve the intended learning outcomes and to demonstrate these through assessment.
- d) There should be clarity about how achievement of the intended learning outcomes will be assessed. Will the placement itself be assessed? Will feedback from the placement organisation count towards the award?
- e) The consequences of failure to secure a placement, or to complete the placement, or to achieve the intended learning outcomes within the placement should be made clear.

6 Pre-entry:

All programmes which contain placements activity as a compulsory part of the course in any of its years should be clearly advertised as such in any marketing collateral. This allows all applicants to make fully informed choices about their course and encourages students with support needs to ascertain the level of support that might be available during the placement.

7 Preparation:

All students taking a placement as part of their course should have an element of preparation. This preparation should, at a minimum, cover:

- a) All aspects of the recruitment process. Where the students are applying to large multinationals, with more comprehensive recruitment processes, more time will need to be allocated to this preparation.
- b) Where appropriate, the academic elements of the placement and how it will be assessed.
- c) University policy and procedures regarding health, safety, welfare and personal insurance cover for the student.
- d) The rights and duties of the student, the University and the employer including ethical considerations, confidentiality and data protection.
- e) Socio/political/cultural/religious considerations that might need to be taken into account.
- f) How they will be supported by the University while they are on placement with special attention to what to do in an emergency and how to react if there is a problem on the placement, for example if they are being bullied.
- g) Colleagues requiring support with this preparation should contact the Careers team.

- h) Prior to going on placement students should receive all relevant information in the form of a Placement Handbook.

8 Approval:

The variety of opportunities on offer at Lancaster and the wide range of organisations and sectors in which our students work means that it will never be completely possible to lay down a definitive set of criteria by which the suitability of a placement is ascertained.

Approval of the placement lies with the placement organiser. Whether the placement can be approved will depend on a number of factors:

- a) The placement location and surrounding area, including consideration of the health, safety and wellbeing of students.
- b) How will the proposed placement offer the student the opportunity to achieve and demonstrate the intended learning outcomes of any related module?
- c) There should be a link between the placement and the student's programme of study.
- d) Does the organisation have the capacity to train, support and manage the student during the placement?
- e) Any specific or special needs of the individual student e.g. disability, health, dietary, religious, and how these will be accommodated within the placement setting; and any reasonable adjustments that need to be made to meet the student's disability-related needs.

9 Health and Safety and Wellbeing:

The University's Health and Safety Unit has produced a specific policy to help placement organisers make informed decisions on health and safety issues affecting their placement students. The guidance is based on the UCEA document 'Health and Safety Guidance for the Placement of Higher Education Students'.

The responsibility for the health and safety of a student on placement primarily lies with the placement provider. However, the University has a legal responsibility under section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act to ensure that placements are suitable. As part of this the placement organiser should conduct a risk assessment.

This guidance places duties on departments, faculties and professional services staff connected with the placement to ensure that the student is sufficiently informed to be able to play a meaningful part in the monitoring process of their placement as well as to confidently question the placement provider in respect of health and safety provision if necessary.

10 Contractual arrangements:

There must be a formal agreement between the University and the employer but the nature and content of these agreements can differ depending on the type of activity. For example, a letter confirming the arrangements involved may suffice for an individual work placement.

- a) All students should have a contract of employment or similar.
- b) The students should usually be employees of the organisation when they are on placement and entitled to all the support, training and development a full employee of the organisation receives.
- c) Students should review the proposed contract with the placement organiser in advance of signing.
- d) Particular attention needs to be given to enabling and supporting participation by disabled students in any placement activities associated with a programme of study. Student Based Services can provide guidance and support in this respect. It is also important to ensure the employer commits to providing or facilitating the required level of support.

12 Monitoring of placements:

The placement organiser should maintain regular contact with the student while they are on placement. It is recommended that students who are on placement for a year should have a face to face visit from a member of university staff. The visit should be part of a formal review that takes place during the placement. If a visit is not possible then the review should be conducted by conference call or online. The review should cover:

- a) The student's induction.
- b) Their role and their daily tasks.
- c) Their skills and personal development.
- d) Any challenges they have faced.
- e) Their placement focussed academic work.
- f) Any concerns about returning to university.

These visits and reviews are a crucial element of our engagement with employers and enable the University to ensure that our students are prepared for their placement and that our curriculum is meeting the needs of employers. Furthermore, they are a crucial part of our placement quality management.

13 Review of placements:

Formal feedback should be gathered from employers, the students themselves and university staff. This will vary but may include placement visits, video calls, questionnaires, reflective logs, and self-assessment forms. This feedback should be reported yearly to the relevant Teaching Committee.

If you have any concerns about a potential or existing work placement please contact the University Careers and Placement Consultant or the relevant placement organiser.