

Student Placements and Study Abroad: Code of Good Practice

[TQA Manual - Introduction and Contents](#)

[Implementation: for all with immediate effect]

1 Introduction

1.1 This code of good practice exists to ensure that the arrangements under which students pursue periods of study (placements) away from the University as part of their academic programmes, are well organised and academically beneficial. It is recognised that placements encompass a wide range of activities (such as the year abroad for language programmes, industrial placements and teaching experience) attracting commensurate variety in learning outcomes and assessment processes. This code is therefore broadly based, listing matters common to all placements, both undergraduate and postgraduate.

2 Management

2.1 Each College should publish its procedures for managing any placements required as part of its academic programmes.

2.2 In developing student placements, the College should ensure where appropriate that the learning content accommodates national subject benchmark statements and the requirements of any accrediting relevant professional and statutory bodies.

2.3 The programme specification should indicate clearly the contribution of the placement to the learning process.

2.4 The provision of placements should promote equality of opportunity for students, as encouraged by the University and required under anti-discrimination legislation relating to race relations, disability discrimination and sex discrimination. Where required, advice should be sought from the University's Equal Opportunities Officer or AccessAbility.

2.5 Every placement should be subject to a formal agreement deposited with the College. The agreement may take various forms depending on the nature of the placement, from an exchange of letters via an external organising central process for a teaching assistantship to a formal contract for an industrial work place and a teacher training position listing in some detail the responsibilities of the various parties. The agreement should also pay appropriate attention to health and safety and to any insurance and professional indemnity issues.

2.6 Close and regular contact between key people in placement partners is an essential pre-requisite for successful placements. Each College should have a nominated link person (or persons) carrying overall responsibility for managing placements within the

curriculum. The College should also have on record the name of the principal active link person where the student placement is located.

- 2.7 Regular placements should be visited from time to time by the appropriate College link person, ideally while a student is present, to underpin the strength of the arrangement and to discuss matters of concern and/or interest. This may not always be an annual exercise but the College should have a clear policy relating to the regularity of such visits.

3 Student Preparation

- 3.1 Students should be fully equipped to capitalise on their placements by being prepared before commencement in the following areas:

Academic:

Students should be aware of a placement's academic content, including aims, intended learning outcomes, option availability, assignment and assessment requirements, and its contribution to a programme's overall assessment. College and student should always agree in writing an agreed programme of activity before the commencement of a placement: this may take the form of a standard module template. [Where the placement is at an EU academic institution, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) should allow harmonisation of credits.]

Language:

See section 4 below.

Accommodation:

Students should be given full advice on how and where to apply for suitable accommodation.

Living Abroad:

If the placement is overseas, students should be provided with appropriate advice on the customs and culture of the country in question and on any health requirements.

Costs:

Students should be given advice on costs arising from placements including accommodation and travel.

- 3.2 Students should be made aware by Colleges of their own responsibilities towards the successful outcome of a placement, including the need to communicate regularly with the home College, to meet academic requirements and to observe the expectations of both University and provider relating to the management of the placement.
- 3.3 It is good practice for students to be provided with a College placement handbook.
- 3.4 Colleges should ensure that feedback from students returning from placement is used as part of the preparation of those about to undergo the same experience. This should include reference to academic, financial, social and cultural issues, as well as more practical matters such as accommodation and travel.
- 3.5 Attention should be drawn to the web site of the International Student Exchange and Support Office (<http://www.exeter.ac.uk/international/>) which contains useful advice for students taking up placements abroad.

4 Language Requirements for Study Abroad

4.1 *Where the language of tuition is not English:*

- 4.1.1 If the language of tuition on a placement is not English, students should be prepared in the language concerned, following an accredited suite of modules. It is important that the availability of such provision is established before any commitment is entered into. Students failing to meet a declared level of proficiency should not be permitted to study abroad. Non-language Colleges should set tests through the [Foreign Language Centre](#), agreeing the minimum number of credits advisable to lift students of different experience to the required level.
- 4.1.2 Recognising the implications for recruitment, it is not attempted here to suggest the application of consistent language requirements between the wide variety of programmes 'with European Study'/'with Study Abroad'.
- 4.1.3 The Foreign Language Centre guarantees to provide 30 credits of language teaching in each of years 1 and 2 for all students for whom this is a prerequisite for their period of study abroad, subject to viability and operational requirements. Where the Foreign Language Centre is not able to offer a particular language / level, equivalent modules may be offered by the Department of Modern Languages in the College of Humanities.
- 4.1.4 To maximise that experience where the principal language of instruction will not be English, the following minimum requirements are recommended to Colleges for language study ahead of the period abroad in programmes 'with European Study'/'with Study Abroad':

Students with GCSE in the language	30 credits in each of years 1 and 2
Students with AS in the language	30 credits in each of years 1 and 2
Students with AL in the language	30 credits in each of years 1 and 2

The requirements assume recent examination experience in the language. It may be appropriate to vary them in the case of fluent speakers or where students are able to take advantage of alternative recognised intensive language tuition which will enable them to attain an equivalent level of language competence.

- 4.1.5 Students who are required to take a module from the Foreign Language Centre as a core element of their programme, i.e. this is a prerequisite for the period of study abroad, must register with the Foreign Language Centre by 3pm on Monday of Week one. Students registering after this date will be accepted subject to timetable and availability of spaces and at the discretion of the Director of the Foreign Language Centre. This is to enable the FLC to meet the commitment to provide 30 credits of language teaching in each of years 1 and 2 for all students for whom this is a prerequisite for their period of study abroad.
- 4.1.6 Students transferring to 'with European Study'/'with Study Abroad' programmes in their second year (and intending to spend the following year abroad) should attain an appropriate proficiency in the relevant language through modules to the value of at

least 30 credits. An assessment of whether 30 credits is sufficient to achieve this proficiency should be made before the programme transfer is agreed.

4.1.7 Colleges must set out any alternative language tuition strategies in proposals for new programmes of study and must be able to justify systematic variation from these requirements as part of the University's Period Subject Review (PSR) process. This includes occasions where the placement is less than an academic year in length.

4.2 *Where the language of tuition is English:*

4.2.1 Where the language of tuition is English in a country where the principal language is not, Colleges must have a clear, published strategy for ensuring that the students concerned are equipped sufficiently to engage positively with the local community using the language of the latter.

4.3 In light of the above recommendations Colleges should keep under review their language entrance requirements for programmes with European Study/with Study Abroad and other opportunities for studying abroad.

5 Student Support and Progress

5.1 For each placement, Colleges must clearly identify to the student before commencement:

- The name of the link person in the home College responsible for managing the placement;
- The name of the contact person at the placement who will provide necessary pastoral/tutorial support;
- The nature of the academic and pastoral support available to the student from the home College including visits.

5.2 Named link persons should have clear and explicit roles and responsibilities of which students should be made aware.

5.3 The monitoring of student progress during a placement also represents an important tool in the support of students. The manner of such monitoring will depend in part on the nature of a placement, but examples of good practice include the following:

- The preparation by students of a log-book or diary which could become part of the assessment; this is particularly useful for students on work placements and teaching assistantships;
- The periodic request, perhaps once a term, to students to produce reports on their placement experience, to be sent to the College's link person for the placement;
- Regular e-mail contact between the College link person and students on placement;
- The need for Colleges to act swiftly on problems raised by students.

5.4 Documentation issued to students should include reference to an appropriate complaints procedure, for use as required by a student about a placement and by the placement provider about the student.

6 Accreditation of Placements and Study Abroad

- 6.1 The University's adoption of enhanced modularity requires the recognition in terms of credits of all the assessed components of a student's programme. Credits should therefore be applied to study abroad and placement components. Although the University has defined credit in terms of workload (1 credit @ a notional 10 hours of learning), it is recognised that many placement requirements are not so easily quantified. It is therefore recommended that in the case of study abroad and placements, credit should be applied broadly in terms of the proportions of an academic year spent away. A full undergraduate year, for instance, would attract 120 credits, a semester 60 credits.
- 6.2 Accreditation should extend to all such study periods spent away, including those which involve a student working in industry or taking paid employment as a language assistant provided this is a part of a student programme which the student has to pass.

7 Assessment

- 7.1 Colleges are reminded that under the University's credit and award criteria, a full year spent on placement or abroad must attract 120 (undergraduate) or 180 (taught postgraduate) credits, all awarded on the basis of assessments carried out during the year and/or a subsequent assessment carried out on a student's return. Assessments must also be carried out in respect of time spent on placements or abroad which last less than a year and attract proportionally less than 120 (or 180) credits.
- 7.2 All placements or study abroad integral to a programme must attract a mark or set of marks which will include any or all of the following: marks for assessments undertaken during the placement, marks for assessments undertaken on return and marks for any additional modules taken by the student as part of the syllabus for the time away. Where a student's placement is not directly assessed by those providing the learning experience, as it would be at a university, the College should set in place a clear mechanism for the assessment of that experience.
- 7.3 The assessment of the placement may use a variety of methods appropriate to the programme of study, but all must be subject to specified conditions and there must be agreed learning outcomes known to the students involved.
- 7.4 A placement that is a formal part of the curriculum should in every case contribute to the final award of the programme of study. Its weighting within a College or programme's assessment criteria for the final award is at the discretion of the College or Board of Examiners but must be clearly stated in the assessment conventions approved by the Board of the appropriate Faculty.
- 7.5 Colleges will prepare a pass/fail result sheets for the students who have spent a period on placement. The result sheets will be ordered by programme and issued to each College's Examinations Officer or the Chair of a Flexible Combined Honours Degree Board of Studies. The result sheet will be returned to the Faculty Office by the date set by that Office.
- 7.6 The failure of a placement will be recorded on a student's transcript.

7.7 The Dean of the Faculty of Taught Programmes is empowered to act concerning student progression in cases of student failure where action is required ahead of the next scheduled Faculty Board meeting.

7.8 A profile of marks for an undergraduate placement in respect of all accredited elements will be returned by the College (or Flexible Combined Honours Degree Board) as soon as possible after the end of the Trinity Term.

8 Conversion of Marks/Grades

8.1 The assessment of placements/years abroad should normally attract mark(s) rather than merely a pass/fail outcome. The mark(s) will be reported on a student's transcript.

8.2 Some placements, particularly those within the UK, will be subject to direct assessment by the home College. In these instances the marking scheme should follow the College's internal conventions. If the external person heading a placement is involved in assessing the student, appropriate guidance should be provided by the College to ensure comparability across the various placements within a particular level.

8.3 Paragraph 7.1 above refers to other circumstances where placements/years abroad will generate marks relating directly to a College's assessment scheme which should require no conversion process.

8.4 As a general principle, marks awarded to students by an institution abroad may be converted to the assessment system employed by a College as long as the conversion criteria are consistent for all students, are approved by the Faculty Board and are published. Marks or grades arising from overseas university experience are likely to originate from one of two sources:

(a) Institutions within the European Credit Transfer Scheme: Colleges should in this instance adopt within their examination conventions a scheme for converting the ECTS grades of their partners into marks compatible with the marking schemes already employed.

(b) Other Overseas HE Institutions: In each case the College concerned should ensure that their students are assessed locally and an appropriate conversion scheme developed to process the assessment results received from the external institution.

Whatever the local practice, Colleges will need to explore the assessment arrangements with care to ensure that the conversion scheme adopted allows comparability of treatment among students attending different institutions.

8.5 In all cases details of the assessment and mark/grade conversion processes should be subject to annual monitoring by the external examiners.

9 Examination Board Procedures

9.1 The procedures described under 7 and 8 above will produce a mark for an Exeter student's placement/study abroad that will count towards their end-of-year assessment. It should therefore be submitted to an examination board in the same way as other marks. It will be for a College, subject to the approval of the appropriate

Faculty of Taught Programmes Board, to define the weighting that such a mark will contribute to a final degree classification or award result. In all circumstances this weighting should be included in the assessment information issued by a College to its students.

- 9.2 The placement assignment(s) by a student contributing to the module mark should be available for monitoring by an external examiner in the process agreed with the examiner. In the case of students studying in an overseas university there will be no involvement of an Exeter external examiner as it is assumed that the assessment will be conducted according to the arrangements of the partner university.

10 Treatment of Failure

- 10.1 All programmes must make provision for the treatment of failure arising from placements. Information issued to students by Colleges must clearly spell out the penalties of failure.
- 10.2 College procedures for the treatment of failure must be approved by the Dean of the appropriate Faculty.

11 Exemption and Non-Completion

- 11.1 Colleges should have clear procedures, approved by the Dean of the appropriate Faculty, for managing exemptions from placements otherwise required for the successful completion of a programme of study.
- 11.2 Colleges must publish clear statements of the academic consequences of non-completion by students of any part of a placement (which may be for reasons beyond their control) or of a failure to secure a placement.

12 Debriefing of Students

- 12.1 The debriefing of students on their return from placements is an important element of the learning process. It serves to validate the student's experience by confirming the importance that the University attaches to it. It also helps to advance the process of reflection on personal gains; debriefing in the context of a student's personal development plan could be especially useful.
- 12.2 Colleges should manage the debriefing process in a manner most appropriate to their circumstances but in all cases provision should be made for the following:
- (a) All returning students should be asked to provide feedback to their College on their placements, through questionnaires, focus groups, interviews or other convenient means.
 - (b) Students should be enabled to reflect on the nature of their placement experience in the context of their programmes of study, though not necessarily through formative or summative assessment exercises.
 - (c) Colleges should make every effort for students to benefit from the placement experience in any further learning and assessment.

- (d) The experience of students in specific placements should be made available to those subsequently going to the same placements, both academic and practical arrangements. The means could include, *inter alia*, presentations, web-based information and questionnaire results.

12.3 It is good practice to recognise, in the design of subsequent teaching that placements contribute to students' understanding and to the development of their key skills.

13 Quality Assurance

13.1 For each placement, Colleges must assure themselves of its quality to ensure that students will receive a rewarding academic experience appropriate to their programme. The following are examples of processes that will aid this procedure:

- Careful validation of the academic content, standards and learning outcomes of the placement and its relation to the remainder of the programme;
- Regular contact between the home link person and a placement contact person, including reports on students;
- Occasional visits to the placement;
- Formal mechanism for student evaluation of the placement, both during and after.

13.2 The effectiveness of Colleges in preparing their students for placements and study abroad should be tested through their internal evaluation procedures (including feedback from students after the period away) and will be further evaluated through the Periodic Subject Review process. The management of questionnaires and other evaluation devices should be made clear to students, including feedback to those who completed them and the subsequent use of results.

13.3 Additionally, Colleges should evaluate the progress and experience on placements of students from different racial groups and of those who are disabled. Where required, advice should be sought from the University's Equal Opportunities Officer or AccessAbility.

14 Communication

14.1 All parties involved in a placement must be informed of the detailed arrangements concluded under the above headings.

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ANNEX

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

Management of Student Placements

- 1 All Colleges of the University making use of placements (home or abroad) for their students as part of academic programmes need to be sure that they have fully considered a range of quality assurance issues. The checklist below will assist Colleges in this process. There will be an expectation that all new programme proposals including placements will have addressed the checklist. It will also allow Colleges to review current practice and provide Periodic Subject Review panels with an additional tool in the process of review.
- 2 Planning the Placement
 - (a) How are suitable placements selected? How is the list kept up to date? What criteria are used for selecting placements?
 - (b) How do students choose a placement? Are they given a free choice, a guided choice or no choice? What steps are taken to see that the placement and the student are compatible?
 - (c) What information is provided to the students on placement, including information about cost?
 - (d) What information is provided for the students on what is expected of them on placement?
 - (e) What induction or training is given to students on their placement?
 - (f) What information/help is given about finding accommodation and other related student support matters?
- 3 Contract with the Placement
 - (a) Is there a formal agreement between the University and the placement which sets out aims and objectives, duties and obligations?
 - (b) Is there a named link person at the placement responsible for its management?
 - (c) What instruction, induction or guidance is given to this person?
- 4 Management of the Placement
 - (a) What level of academic supervision and pastoral support is given to the student?
 - (b) Is there a clear route for the student to report back to the College during the placement?

- (c) Is there a clear routine for the link person at the placement to report back during the placement?
- (d) What provision is there for a placement visit?
- (e) Is there a complaints procedure?
- (f) Is there provision for changing the placement, if it proves unsuitable?

5 Assessment of the Placement

- (a) How will the placement be assessed?
- (b) If the link person at the placement plays a role in the assessment, is this clearly explained to both student and link person?
- (c) What sort of assessment template is provided for the person at the placement responsible for any assessment?
- (d) What provision is there for the moderation of the placement and its assessment?

6 Feedback

- (a) What provision is there for student feedback?
- (b) What provision is there for supervisor feedback?
- (c) Is there any regular meeting of placement link persons?

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