University Health & Safety Arrangements: Chapter 16

Student placements (including medical placements subject to endorsements)

Key word(s):	Study placements; Erasmus placements; medical placements subject to endorsements (StEPs); electives;
Target audience:	Organisers of student placements;

Contents

Note: **"Senior Managers"** are responsible for health and safety within their specified areas and/or as a consequence of their activities, and for any additional activities as agreed and delegated to them (e.g. where they accept responsibility for day-to-day safety arrangements for staff who have other line managers, for reasons of geographical or other convenience).

"Senior managers" may be Deans, Heads of School, Directors of Institutes, Directors and Heads of Service in non-academic areas, the University Librarian, the Directors of the Manchester Museum and the Whitworth Art Gallery, and their equivalents.

The term **"student placement"** refers to any placement that is a requirement of a course of study or qualification, or contributes to the course marks, which involves the transfer of supervision of the student to the placement provider (usually another organisation) and this distinguishes the placements from other off-campus activity and fieldwork (see Chapter 24).

Introduction

1. Students undertake and benefit from a wide range of student placement opportunities. The detailed arrangements for each will vary depending on the type and nature of each student placement. Factors to be taken into account when deciding on the arrangements for the student placement may include:

   - the relationship to a course of study – is it a course requirement, a placement opportunity to expand horizons, or a purely voluntary experience?

   - the nature of the relationship between the placement provider and the University, and how the provider has been selected

   - the duration – is it a week, or a year?

   - whether it is a "work" or "study" placement, academic, research or clinical

   - whether it takes place in the UK where health & safety legislation applies, or abroad where very different health and safety norms may exist

   - whether the placement is a requirement of registration with professional body (e.g. many of the health care placements)

2. This chapter is therefore intended to outline the principles of managing student placements from a health and safety perspective, rather than the detailed arrangements appropriate to the different placement types.

   The University has adopted the Universities & Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) and Safety and Health Association (USHA) guidance on student placements[1]. By definition, this includes any placement that is a requirement of a course of study or qualification, or contributes to the course marks. Also by definition, placements involve a transfer of supervision to the placement provider (usually, another employer) and this distinguishes placements from other off-campus activity and fieldwork (see Chapter 24). For other work experience related activities (e.g. volunteering) offered by the University which are not a requirement of a course of study or qualification, it may be appropriate to adopt the principles of risk management outlined in this document.

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[1] http://www.ucea.ac.uk/download.cfm/docid/6217CBEC-4722-43F5-877B61D6F7986BCB

General Principles

A. Risk assessment

3. An initial "pre-placement" risk assessment must be carried out before the student placement is approved, and prior to the start of the placement. The purpose of the pre-placement risk assessment is not to duplicate the responsibilities of the placement provider during the placement but should be more concerned with ensuring the student has the right information, understanding of risks involved, training and support arrangements, particularly in the case of disabled students, to enable them to benefit safely from the placement.

4. In many cases, School staff will prepare the risk assessment (e.g. for a regular group of students doing a similar student placement each year; for students on placements to universities or organisations/sponsors collaborating on a regular basis with the University of Manchester).

5. In some instances it will be more appropriate for the student to prepare the risk assessment (e.g. medical placements subject to endorsement (StEPs)). In such cases, the student must have received sufficient instruction, training and information (see section C below).

6. Pre-placement risk assessments for schemes initiated by academic schools (eg Erasmus) are the responsibility of the initiating school. Those for University-wide bilateral (UG only) world-wide exchange programmes organised by the International Programmes Office will be carried out by the IPO. These may be year or semester study placements or exchanges. The wide range of schemes however means that both IPO and school must clarify responsibility in any case of doubt or confusion.

B. Risk profiling

7. Schools may find it useful to adopt a risk profiling model adapted for their own range of student placement activities. This mirrors the model in Chapter 24 for Off-campus work including fieldwork. All risk assessments must be carried out by someone who has received appropriate training, and can identify the hazards and assess the risks.

Risk Profiling Model
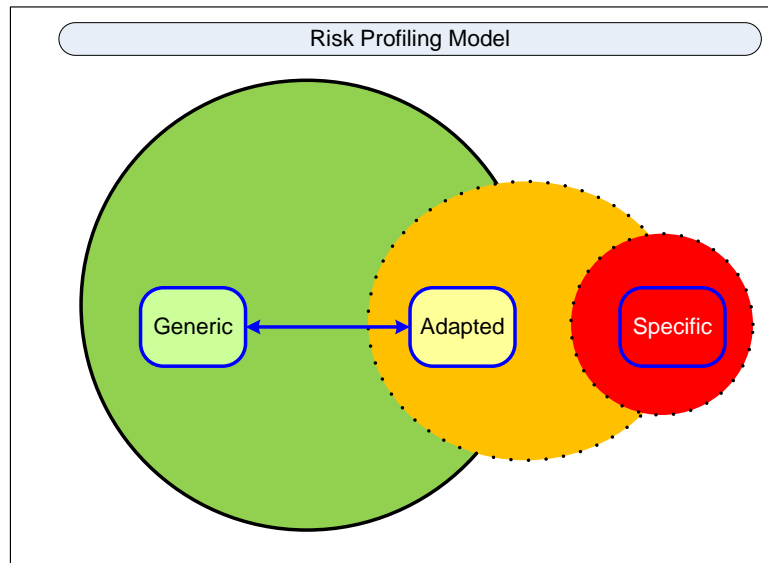
- Generic risk assessments for low risk activities (green zone): these written risk assessments can relate to a single activity or a range of activities within a student placement, as long as the scope (and its limits) is described in the document. The student can make their own dynamic (unwritten) risk assessments within the scope of the generic one, without the need to amend documentation or refer back to the original author. A simple example might be travelling by train in the UK.

- Adapted risk assessments for medium risk activities (amber zone): if activities fall outside the scope of any generic risk assessment, it may be possible to adapt or add to the generic risk assessment so that it covers the full range of activities during the student placement. Since the risk is greater, these need to be **checked** by a line manager, supervisor, principal investigator, etc., who can apply common sense scrutiny. A simple example might be travelling alone by train to the continent overnight.

- Specific risk assessments for high risk activities (red zone): a detailed risk assessment is needed to cover the full range of activities during the student placement. E.g. a student placement involving diving, working with high risk individuals, etc. Activities in this category will invariably be higher risk and should be reviewed and approved by another competent and independent person who has expertise in the task. The reviewer will normally be a senior manager (as defined above). An example might be travelling alone by train to the Indian sub-continent.

8. School handbooks may contain elements of risk profiling, checklists, how to register contact details and other frequently asked questions.

9. The following table suggests prompts to assist in allocating the type of risk assessment needed.

Prompt	Generic	Adapted	Specific
Scope of activity	Very familiar	Familiar	Unfamiliar
Experience of activity	Very experienced	Experienced	New to activity
Placement provider	Used previously on many occasions; familiar to placement organiser; no adverse reports	Used previously; visit not made or not practicable; no adverse reports	Unknown provider, visit not undertaken or practicable; or provider used before but adverse reports from previous placements.
Risks	Risks are well defined and understood, and controlled by Placement Provider. If they do arise they can still be easily mitigated by the person undertaking the activity.	Risks are understood but subject to some variables. If they do occur, they can still be readily mitigated.	Significant risks could be forseeably realised and cause significant losses to individuals, assets, reputations, programmes of research / work etc.
Supervision	Not required for the activity or undertaken by the Placement Provider	Minimal and can be direct or indirect.	Substantial 'monitoring' required by Placement Provider (or other appointed person) of anticipated or emerging risks.
Control	Individual is able to directly control any consequential risks if and when they arise; or has immediate access to Placement Provider Supervisor who can do so.	Individual is able to control any low or medium consequential risks that may arise. Access to additional resource(s) may require authorisation e.g. by local Placement Provider supervisor.	To safely undertake the task requires expertise, full control of activity and ready access to resource(s) to mitigate significant risks should they arise.
Information and instruction	Routine information required to safely complete the placement	More specific information required to successfully complete the placement, possibly additional training.	Detailed information, instruction and/or training is required to complete the placement. Placement may require legal notifications, consent from competent authorities and licensing regimes.
FCO advice	There are no	There are no	FCO advise against all

Prompt	Generic	Adapted	Specific
	advisory warnings issued by the FCO on travelling to the area.	advisory warnings issued by the FCO but there is advice about aspects of personal safety and security, or avoiding certain areas or activities.	but essential travel *or* advise against all travel.
Approvals	By Placement Organiser	By Line Manager, PI or other person appointed by the School.	By HOS, Dean or President (escalated depending on the risk)

C. Preparation of students

10. All students must understand the purpose and content of the pre-placement risk assessment, alongside its scope and limitations, and its relationship to the placement provider's risk assessment. They should be trained and prepared to adapt the risk assessment or make dynamic risk assessments and decisions whilst on their student placement. Thinking through the hazards that they may encounter, and preparing themselves to manage or control the risks, should be part of the preparation for carrying out dynamic risk assessments in circumstances subject to unpredictable or unexpected change.

11. Where students are asked to prepare their own risk assessments, such assessments must be submitted, as part of the student placement approval and/or endorsement process, to a member of staff who can review the content to ensure that it is (i) comprehensive and realistic; (ii) has considered and addressed the foreseeable risks; and (iii) described how any additional training, awareness, and other preparations are to be implemented.

12. Any student who has been asked to prepare their own risk assessment must be given suitable and sufficient information, training and instruction. This may comprise instruction and training within schools, completion of an on-line module on risk assessment adapted for student placements, formal lectures or workshops, or a combination of the above, depending on the circumstances and expectations of the student placement.

13. Students should understand that neither pre-placement risk assessments nor those carried out by their placement provider will cover any extra-curricular activity that they may choose to undertake whilst on placement.

D. Staff endorsing/approving placements

14. Where students have been asked to prepare their own risk assessments and submit them as part of the placement approval process, the risk assessments will need to be reviewed and checked by a member of staff who is competent to do so (e.g. members of staff who routinely carry out risk assessments for teaching purposes). Those members of staff should complete the SL&D course on risk assessment, and attend a workshop/interactive session using practical examples (arranged through SL&D/Safety Services).

15. Further advice on the risk assessment process is available from University Safety Co-ordinators and Safety Services.

16. The University placement organiser and placement provider must exchange information about how the risks will be managed, and who is responsible at different stages of the placement preparation and experience. This communication should be in writing, either in a formal agreement (e.g. for regular and repeated arrangements) or by exchange of emails (e.g. for "one off" arrangements).

E. Management of risk during placement

17. Day-to-day management of safety risks during a student placement is usually beyond the immediate control of the University.

18. Where supervision lies with the student placement provider, the pre-placement risk assessment should specify how the student's safety will be managed on site; this should be agreed in advance and in writing with the student placement provider.

19. In some types of student placement, the placement provider may not always be present (e.g. overseas work for a charity), may not be familiar with health and safety management responsibilities (e.g. an organisation in another country), or may have a relatively unstructured and informal approach (e.g. small aid organisation) and this should be clearly accounted for in the risk assessment. In such instances, students may need additional support and training to understand the risk assessment, its scope and limitations, and the need to make dynamic risk assessments and decisions whilst on the student placement.

20. Contingency plans should also be outlined where necessary and students should be aware of where, how and to whom any concerns should be raised.

F. Communications during the student placement

21. Schools will already have arrangements for maintaining communications during student placements to ensure they achieve their academic purpose. It is particularly important to maintain channels of communication for emergency purposes. These may include Blackboard space, discussions boards and similar electronic means of communication. It is recommended that Placement Organisers or Academic Advisors should **maintain regular contact, at pre-agreed intervals, with any student on placement.**

22. The University has established a means of informing students about natural disasters (earthquakes, tsunamis) and civil unrest through Campus Solutions

23. Routine communications should be used to explore less urgent health and safety issues as they arise and where they cannot be resolved by the student locally.

G. Feedback from returning students

24. The experiences of students on placements should be used to inform risk assessments for future placements. Means of obtaining this data could be through assessed reflective work, reports on standard templates, workshops or presentations by students for the following year students, an electronic questionnaire, or other means suited to the placement arrangements.

Document control box	
Title	Chapter 16: Student Placements (including medical placements subject to endorsement).
Date first approved:	14 April 2014
Approving body:	Safety, Health & Environment Committee
Implementation date:	23 August 2018
Version:	1.2 (July 2018) minor modifications to para 1 & para 21 providing a broader perspective based on a risk assessment approach + minor factual corrections and updates 1.1 (March 2016) personnel change 1.0
Next review date:	April 2021(or upon significant change)
Owner of this chapter	Occupational Health, Safety & Training Advisory Group (OHSTAG) Chair : Professor Nalin Thakkar Secretary: Dr Patrick Seechurn