

Extraordinary measures to manage a shortfall in the minimum duration of sandwich placements and placement/international placement/international study diplomas

1. Introduction

- a. Normally, a sandwich placement must include one or more learning experiences, totalling a minimum of 36 weeks duration (Quality Handbook Section 10D, paragraph 3.1).
- b. In most cases sandwich placements will be 46.5 weeks in length where placement is undertaken over a full year.
- c. A student will be eligible for a sandwich award if they (Quality Handbook Section 16, paragraph 18.1):
 - i. complete the required number of weeks of placement activity;
 - ii. achieve the competencies, learning outcomes and workplace experience as required in the placement specification;
 - iii. submit and pass the specified assessment requirements.
- d. Normally, a Placement, International Placement or International Study Diploma will involve a minimum of 36 weeks of placement or study abroad, and all associated assessment at levels P4, P5, or/and P6 (Quality Handbook Supplement PL1, paragraph 2.3).
- e. A student who successfully completes a placement will be entitled to a placement award. A placement award may be conferred with pass, commendation or distinction (Quality Handbook Section 16, paragraphs 19.1-19.2).
- f. Due to the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is likely that some students may not be able to complete the normal minimum 36-week requirement for a sandwich award and/or a diploma as a result of potential disruption / uncertainty within their industry and / or renewed national or local lockdown measures. Current regulations allow for a shortfall in weeks, as follows:
 - i. Exceptionally, where a placement cannot be satisfied due to illness or some other valid cause, require a student complete satisfactorily an alternative form of assessment which simulates some of the characteristics of supervised placement activity (Quality Handbook Section 16, paragraph 21.1b).

In the current situation, any student whose placement or study abroad experience is impacted by Covid-19 related issues will be subject to this regulation.

- g. This codicil sets out a temporary regulatory change to ensure that students are not disadvantaged by the current situation and to allow course teams latitude to use other options for completion of sandwich/diploma requirements in the 2021/22 academic year.

2. Principles

- a. All students should be encouraged to complete a minimum requirement of 36 weeks placement or study abroad.
- b. Where it is not possible for a student to complete 36 weeks for reasons related to the pandemic, the minimum requirement for students on placement or study abroad may be reduced to 24 weeks, and should be agreed at School level.
- c. All decisions made in accordance with these regulations will ensure that academic standards are not compromised.
- d. The measures put in place will ensure that 2021/22 placement and study abroad students are not disadvantaged compared to previous and future cohorts.
- e. It should be noted that students on a Student Visa are required to be in full time education or on placement for the duration of the academic year, therefore it will be necessary to ensure that these students are on placement for this period of time or that suitable alternative arrangements are put in place that adhere to UKVI regulations.

3. Alternative options for sandwich placements and study abroad

- a. Where a student cannot undertake or continue a placement in a physical setting, alternative options will be considered. Such options may include consideration of a working-from-home arrangement where possible. Schools need to consider whether such arrangements are a suitable replacement for the original placement activity.
- b. Where it is not possible for a student to continue with a placement opportunity for the normal 36 weeks or more, Schools should consider alternative options to enable students to meet the learning outcomes for the placement. An example might be to agree an alternative task with a suitable assessment. It is recognised that it may be difficult to put in place equivalent experiences in this context.
- c. The focus of decision making should be on ensuring that the experiences and assessment meet the course requirements and learning outcomes as closely as possible.
- d. Decisions will need to be made on an individual student basis. Course teams may need to make temporary adjustments to learning outcomes, competencies and experiences in the Placement Specification, which can be approved by the School Academic Standards and Quality Committees.

4. Certification

- a. Students on a sandwich placement or study abroad often complete 'P' credits towards an additional diploma award. The learning for such awards is specified on a University Placement Specification.
- b. Alternative arrangements put in place for placement and study abroad students need to enable students to meet the learning outcomes for the additional award.
- c. Schools may need to make temporary adjustments to Placement Specifications, which can be approved by the School Academic Standards and Quality Committee.

5. Decisions at Progression Boards

- a. Boards should consider whether the competencies, learning outcomes and experiences for the sandwich award and additional certification can be confirmed as met, and whether all the associated assessment has been passed. Where this is the case, eligibility for a sandwich award can be confirmed and the placement award conferred with pass, commendation or distinction.

6. Contingency planning for 2022/23

- a. It is possible that students entering a sandwich or study abroad year in 2022/23 may still be impacted by social distancing measures or other pandemic related issues. It may therefore be necessary to continue the measures in the Codicil for these students. This Codicil will be reviewed and updated to account for ongoing changes to government guidelines. Contingency planning should commence to ensure students are able to undertake alternative experiences where a future shortfall in weeks is likely.
- b. Planning should take into account potential restrictions for students on a Student visa, who may be required to be either in placement or learning for the duration of the academic year, and who may not be permitted to work from home.
- c. In addition, Schools should consider the potential financial implications for students of a hybrid year spent partially on placement and partially in education.