

# Section 10D

Nottingham Trent University

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## **Quality Handbook**

**Part C: Assuring and  
enhancing quality**

**Section 10D: Placements**

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## 1. Contextual statement

**This section provides a generic framework within which all activity should be based. Irrespective of what form of learning takes place, placement activity must be consistent with University academic regulations, subject benchmark statements, other relevant reference points and Professional, Regulatory or Statutory Body (PSRB) requirements (where these apply).**

- 1.1 Section 10 of the Quality Handbook (QH) covers all the University's awards offered through provision delivered with others, and therefore applies to any University provisions that involve the delivery or assessment of University credits offsite, and / or involving staff not employed at the University. This Section 10D refers to placements.
- 1.2 Other forms of work-based learning, including employer-responsive courses, are outside the scope of this policy.

## 2. Definition

- 2.1 **Placement learning** is learning where a student, as part of a University course, undertakes a negotiated and agreed period of work or research based/study experience, normally outside the University, and where the learning from that experience is monitored and assessed according to a set of validated outcomes.

### Explanatory notes

- The policy is not intended to cover learning outside the University that is not a planned (and approved) part of a course, such as part-time, term-time and vacation work that students have arranged for themselves. In addition, it does not apply to professional or vocational practice courses designed for individuals already in employment.
- Examples of placement learning include sandwich placements (normally 36 weeks + in total, sometimes made up of a number of shorter and/or different learning experiences), short placements (normally between 1-35 weeks in total) and study abroad.

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## 3. Length of experience

**Students, staff and employers should understand the minimum requirements related to the length of the student's experience in the work-place. The different types of placement available should be made clear to students and employers.**

### Requirements

- 3.1 A sandwich placement must include one or more learning experiences, normally totalling a minimum of 36 weeks duration.
- 3.2 Sandwich placements should meet the expectations of the sandwich placement providers and students, and in most cases will be 46.5 weeks in length where placement is undertaken over a full year.
- 3.3 Short placements may have variable length of between 1 and 35 weeks, but the anticipated duration of the placement should be clearly specified in the course documentation.

## 4. Contact with students

**Students receive proportionate contact arrangements to support and optimise their learning whilst they are away from the University.**

### Requirements

- 4.1 Contact between the University and the student serves four purposes:
  - a. To provide pastoral care and ensure student satisfaction;
  - b. To ensure that the quality of experience is appropriate to learning and assessment requirements;
  - c. To build and maintain relationships with the employer;
  - d. To support the resolution of problems.
- 4.2 The following minimum contact arrangements apply to all **sandwich** placements, irrespective of the duration:
  - a. There is an initial telephone contact carried out by the Employability Team where possible within the first 2-4 weeks of the placement.
  - b. During the period of placement there is one contact every term or every 3 months in person, or by telephone or video call to be undertaken by the placement tutor.

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- c. One of the termly contacts in 4.2b above should be with the student and the employer. Further additional contacts with the employer are encouraged.
  - d. One of the contacts may be replaced with a call back day, which may be held virtually. Where a student is unable to attend a call back day then contact by telephone or video call is undertaken and subsequently documented in Inplace.
  - e. Contacts are carefully timed and spaced throughout the duration of the placement. The first contact should ideally take place within 6-10 weeks of the commencement of the placement.
  - f. Written notes are produced following each contact and are entered directly or uploaded to Inplace.
- 4.3 The following contact arrangements are recommended for placements of less than 36 weeks; however, these are not guaranteed and do not form part of a commitment to students:
- a. For placements of less than 6 weeks duration, no contact is initiated by the University; however, the student can initiate contact with a tutor or member of the Employability Team should they so need. Students should also be given the opportunity to request that contact is made within 6 weeks.
  - b. For placements of between 6-11 weeks in duration, there is one contact from the Employability Team or course tutor by telephone or video call.
  - c. For placements of between 12-35 weeks in duration, there is an initial telephone contact carried out by the Employability Team, and a further contact from the tutor by telephone or video call. The first of these should ideally take place within 6-10 weeks of the commencement of the placement.
- 4.4 The tutor or member of the Employability Team should make contact with the student before the placement starts and should ensure that the student has all the necessary details to contact them should the need arise.
- 4.5 Irrespective of who makes the contact or when it is made, issues identified as a result are documented and followed up. Understanding of any issues identified are confirmed with the student or employer by email. The response, and any actions undertaken are documented in the notes of the contact and entered on Inplace.
- 4.6 Responsibility for follow up of identified issues rests with the person who made the contact until the issue is resolved.

## Explanatory notes

- The arrangements for contact during all placements are specified in the course documentation.
- Certain placements, for example professional placements in teacher training or social work, have industry prescribed mentor or contact requirements and are therefore exempt from the minimum contact requirements set out in paragraphs 4.2-4.3 above. The requirements for these placements are specified in the approved course documentation.

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## 5. Assessment of placements

**The assessment requirements for all sandwich and shorter placements should meet the underlying policies, practices and regulations detailed in QH Section 15 and must be clearly outlined to students prior to their learning commencing.**

- 5.1 Schools and course teams ensure there is a process in place for the receipt, marking and moderation of, and feedback on, placement related assessments.
- 5.2 All sandwich placement, and other credit rated placement assessment grades are submitted to the final year Board of Examiners or progression board, as appropriate, in order for them to be ratified.
- 5.3 Sandwich placements may also be required to meet the minimum standards of any relevant PSRB.
- 5.4 Students can receive additional 'certification' in respect of the additional outcomes they have received through placement or study abroad, in the form of a Placement Diploma or Certificate (see Quality Handbook Supplement (QHS) PL1).

## 6. Key responsibilities of the University

**Key responsibilities are identified as 'broad' statements on which all placement activity should be based. Irrespective of what form the learning takes place, it is expected that Schools, course teams and the Student Employability team will interpret the requirements in a way that ensures placements are consistent with these statements.**

- 6.1 Where a placement is an intended part of a course, a course team, working in conjunction with the Employability Team, must ensure at all times that:
  - a. the individual responsibilities for managing, supporting and monitoring the placement are clearly defined;
  - b. the intended learning outcomes contribute to the overall aims of the course (and are consistent with any appropriate UK Subject Benchmarks);
  - c. any assessment of the placement is part of a coherent assessment strategy – this should include appropriate arrangements for moderation and feedback within the course's Assessment and Feedback Plan – see QHS 15D;
  - d. consideration is given to equality and disability policy regulations.
- 6.2 In addition, the course team, working in conjunction with the Employability Team, must:

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- a. define their procedures for securing, approving and allocating placements, including information on the consequences for students of a failure to secure or complete a placement;
  - b. define their procedures and criteria for the approval of individual placements;
  - c. consider what provision is made for students exempt from a placement, or unable to find a suitable opportunity;
  - d. have clearly defined policies and procedures for terminating placement agreements, should that eventuality arise, and these should be referred to in any employment contract;
  - e. have appropriate regulations to cover failure/non-completion and procedures to manage re-assessment opportunities;
  - f. consider grievance and disciplinary procedures for the student as a student and recognise that an employer will have comparable procedures for the student as an employee;
  - g. ensure that placements comply with NTU's Health and Safety Policy;
  - h. consider the requirements of relevant statutory regulatory, professional or funding bodies;
  - i. ensure there is clear information available about the allocation of placements where these involve collaborative agreements with employers and placement providers or students from another Higher Education Institution (HEI);
  - j. take reasonable steps to help all students regardless of relevant equality characteristics;
  - k. work to optimise placement opportunity.
- 6.3 The criteria to be used when approving placement opportunities should address the providers' ability to:
- a. provide learning opportunities that enable the intended learning outcomes to be achieved;
  - b. support students;
  - c. fulfil their responsibilities under health and safety legislation in the workplace, having regard to the level of skill and experience of the student; and
  - d. clarify the provider's role (if any) in the assessment of the student.

## Explanatory note

- It may be appropriate to obtain a written agreement from the provider to confirm their commitment and ability to provide the student with the specified learning opportunities.

- 6.4 The course team, working in conjunction with the Employability Team, must assure the University that placement providers will be made fully aware of these criteria.

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These aspects should be outlined, as appropriate, in the definitive course information in CourseLoop and in subsequent supporting documents.

- 6.5 Course teams, working in conjunction with the Employability Team, must ensure that prior to starting a placement, students are made aware of their responsibilities:
- a. as ambassadors of the University;
  - b. towards the placement provider and its customers, clients, patients, and employees;
  - c. for completing all appropriate enrolment processes relevant to the placement period;
  - d. for managing their learning and professional relationships;
  - e. for recording their progress and achievements (i.e. the use of portfolio/e-portfolios, the certification of placement learning);
  - f. for alerting the placement provider and University to problems with the placement that might prevent progress or satisfactory completion;
  - g. for providing and maintaining up-to-date contact details.
- 6.6 The course team, in conjunction with the Employability Team, should make students aware of the following:
- a. that they can expect appropriate support from the University in order to enable them to meet the required learning outcomes;
  - b. that they should be provided with information in advance of their placement opportunity;
  - c. that they will be made aware of any financial implications associated with the placement opportunity;
  - d. that they should be treated in accordance with applicable legislation;
  - e. that they should be provided with a safe placement environment;
  - f. that depending on the nature and duration of the placement/work-based opportunity students should expect contact as set out in paragraphs 4.1-4.6;
  - g. can expect a re-orientation and de-briefing session. This session may be held virtually.
- 6.7 The course team, working in conjunction with the Employability Team, will need to ensure that students are provided with appropriate guidance and support in preparation for, during, and after their placement to optimise their learning opportunity. Guidance should be provided to students, developed whenever possible in consultation with placement providers, on such matters as:
- a. the support they provide to students where the responsibility for securing a placement rests with the student;
  - b. appropriate induction to the placement environment, including health and safety information;
  - c. pre-placement risk assessment for international placements;



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- d. occupational health considerations or requirements, including immunization (for example for health service or some international placements);
  - e. any legal or ethical considerations (e.g. client or patient confidentiality);
  - f. the means of recording the achievement of specific learning outcomes and progress, e.g. using a Personal Development Portfolio (PDP);
  - g. availability of additional language or skills preparation;
  - h. the need for personal insurance cover particularly when on placement abroad;
  - i. cultural orientation and work expectations;
  - j. the University's support services that will remain available to students during placements; and appropriate re-orientation (with provision for reflection, consolidation and dissemination) on students' return to the University.
- 6.8 Course teams and Schools, working in conjunction with the Employability Team, should monitor and review the effectiveness of their placement opportunities. Any action points (including potential enhancements) should be reported on an annual basis via the Interim Course Report and Course Development Plan. (The University will also consider placements as an item during Periodic Review). The monitoring process is expected to consider:
- a. encouraging placement supervisors and students to provide feedback on progress, the sharing of feedback between students, placement providers and the University and the communication of any concerns in a timely way to the Institution;
  - b. periodically reviewing the progress of students;
  - c. using feedback from placement staff, supervisors/mentors, external examiners and students;
  - d. the procedures within which feedback on the quality and standards of the placement is received and that appropriate action is taken where necessary, ensuring that there is equality of opportunity in access to placements and that placement providers are aware of their responsibilities to provide fair treatment in this respect – any salient measures (or good practice) should be reported in interim course reports;
  - e. formal and informal means of gathering feedback from placement providers about the relevant arrangement.

## Explanatory note

- In the case of short placements, the responsibilities set out in para. 6 above should be modified according to the length and nature of the placement opportunity to ensure that appropriate but proportionate arrangements are in place.

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## 7. Key responsibilities of the placement provider

**It is the expectation of the University that the placement provider will provide the students with appropriate learning opportunities.**

- 7.1 The course team and the Employability Team must ensure that placement providers:
- a. are aware of the requirements and expectations of the student and the University;
  - b. recognise that recruitment will follow a natural cycle related to an academic year;
  - c. have appropriate procedures in place for the recruitment of placement students;
  - d. liaise with the University at appropriate and regular points;
  - e. have realistic expectations of what induction and training will be required and what students can then deliver;
  - f. co-operate with the University in all procedural matters, including relevant legal and health and safety provision;
  - g. consider appointing a mentor for each student to oversee the training, development and general learning of the student;
  - h. make appropriate provision for the student to be contacted;
  - i. co-operate with the University in all course requirements;
  - j. attend any briefing events organised by the University. These sessions may be held virtually;
  - k. inform and involve the University should any issue of serious concern arise;
  - l. provide, on request, an appropriate statement on the student's conduct and performance;
  - m. provide the student with a debrief session. This session may be held virtually;
  - n. provide the student with an appropriate testimonial or reference, as appropriate;
  - o. consider equality and disability legislation;
  - p. provide students with opportunities to review their progress, identify strengths and weaknesses and to plan and agree any necessary remedial action.

### Explanatory note

- In the case of short placements, the responsibilities set out in para. 7 should be modified according to the length and nature of the placement opportunity to ensure that appropriate but proportionate arrangements are in place.

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## 8. Key responsibilities of the student

**Students' entitlements and responsibilities should be clearly stated at the outset of the placement.**

- 8.1 Course and Employability Teams should provide adequate briefings for students, so that they should be in a position to:
- a. acknowledge the commitment and preparation required when enrolling on a course of study incorporating a placement;
  - b. familiarise themselves with the course requirements relating to placement;
  - c. the seeking of placement opportunities is a co-operative activity and that it is the student's individual responsibility to secure and deliver a satisfactory placement;
  - d. make full use of the support offered by the University in connection with the placement opportunity;
  - e. research and apply for an appropriate range and number of placement opportunities;
  - f. acknowledge interview appointments that have been made by the University, and inform the University and the provider if these appointments cannot be met;
  - g. recognise and comply with reasonable binding arrangements for the offer and acceptance of placement opportunities;
  - h. provide the University with details of any positions accepted;
  - i. attend appropriate briefing sessions, including those on health and safety;
  - j. take every opportunity to optimise the learning experience;
  - k. co-operate with the placement contact tutor; and make appropriate contact arrangements;
  - l. reflect on the learning experience and the integration of placement activity with academic modules;
  - m. share experiences with fellow students and staff;
  - n. utilise the experience as a basis for directing and focusing career plans.
- 8.2 All parties to placements should be made aware of the University's Complaints Procedure as set out in QH Section 17E.

### Explanatory notes

- In the case of short placements, the responsibilities set out in para. 8 should be modified according to the length and nature of the placement opportunity to ensure that appropriate but proportionate arrangements are in place.

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## 9. Approval of placements

**The University will ensure that the academic standards and quality of any placement opportunities are consistent with normal University practices.**

- 9.1 All courses containing placements are subject to the approval procedures of the University, as set out in QH Section 5.
- 9.2 Placements which are self-sourced by students are reviewed for suitability by the School to ensure that the placement opportunity aligns with and allows the student to demonstrate the relevant learning outcomes. Students must send a job description to the Placement and Business Adviser within the Employability Team who will liaise with the course team to confirm suitability. The job description must align to the course requirements.
- 9.3 Placements which are sourced by a member of the Placement and Business Adviser team can be approved by the Business Advisor without reference to the School.
- 9.4 Placements must be approved before the start date of the placement. Placements cannot be approved retrospectively by the Placement and Business Adviser team: that is, if the placement is a significant way through, or after the placement has concluded. It is a School decision whether placements not approved or tracked, may be considered for assessment.
- 9.5 Following approval, placements should be monitored within the normal course management process, as set out in QH Section 6.
- 9.6 Placements will be considered as an item at Periodic Review, as set out in QH Section 7.

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<b>Policy owner</b>
CADQ

<b>Change history</b>			
<i>Version:</i>	<i>Approval date:</i>	<i>Implementation date:</i>	<i>Nature of significant revisions:</i>
Sept 2016	30.09.16	01.10.16	Changes to contact arrangements for placement students
May 2017	12.09.17	01.10.17	Removed references to work-related and work-based learning. Reduced length at which learning can be certified from 10 to 6 weeks. Changes to contact arrangements for placements students. Process for approving self-sourced placements made explicit.
Sept 2018	12.09.18	01.10.18	None
Sept 2019	11.09.19	01.10.19	None
Sept 2020	16.09.20	01.10.20	Change to the minimum number of weeks required for a sandwich placement from 36 to 24 for 2020/21 only Changes to contact arrangements for placement students and provision for call back days to be held virtually
Sept 2021	07.09.21	01.10.21	Normal minimum number of weeks required for a sandwich placement reverted back to 36 weeks. Reference to Codicil to the Placements Policy: Covid-19 contingency 2021/22 added which includes a provision for Schools to agree that the minimum number of weeks can be reduced to 24 for placements impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.
Sept 2022	22.09.22	01.10.22	None
Sept 2023	14.09.23	01.10.23	Placements Codicil removed, and clarification provided on the deadline for approving placements.

<b>Equality Analysis</b>		
<i>Version:</i>	<i>EA date:</i>	<i>Completed by:</i>
Sept 2015	26.10.2015	CADQ