

**Staff:** Your guide to  
Postgraduate Placements  
2018/19



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# 1. Introduction

University of Sussex faculty and students are increasingly building in work-based learning opportunities into their postgraduate courses.

The Careers and Employability Centre (CEC) is here to help staff, students and employers navigate the placements process and fulfil all legal and duty of care requirements.

We can help by:

- training students on how to search for opportunities
- evaluating employers to ensure that they are legitimate and offering a genuine learning opportunity
- gathering the information required for faculty to appraise the role and its suitability
- verifying that the placement complies with UK employment law
- providing the systems to assist the relevant faculty to monitor attendance and progress
- reporting to the Student Systems and Records Office to ensure we are compliant with UKVI regulations.

This guide will help you in planning your placement activity – including details of what needs to be done, and when.

**CEC** leads on placement preparation and employer liaison, with support from academic and professional services staff in schools of study. CEC also assists students and employers in effectively documenting and risk assessing their proposed role.

**The school** supports, monitors and assesses students on their placement. During placement, a school-appointed academic member of staff (usually the Course Convenor) should lead on student support.

The University, employers and students work together with the goal of a rewarding student experience before, during and after a placement.

**Postgraduate placements are:**

- between 2 weeks and 6 months long, usually full-time work
- a work-based project or course-related work experience (rather than fieldwork where the primary objective is to gather research data)
- assessed in some way.

## **Postgraduate placement assessment options**

Placement learning can be embedded into the course in a variety of ways. Current examples include:

1. Incorporating placement learning into a dissertation. The School of Global Studies has a Dissertation with Placement option:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/global/internal/departments/ir/pgcourses/2018/M1501T/47296>

2. The placement can be a module in itself and assessed with a portfolio and/or dissertation. The School of History, Art History and Politics has an example of this type of placement module:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/hahp/internal/arthistory/pgcourses/2018/V4507T/62886>

## **Postgraduate placements best practice**

*The following points are important to consider in order for the University to meet its obligations for equality of access and duty of care:*

- you should inform all students of the opportunity to undertake a placement at the beginning of their studies to allow them time to prepare
- for faculty-sourced opportunities, recruitment should be by a fair and transparent process, in which all students on the course can participate.

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

Postgraduate placements tend to be student- or faculty-led, with the Careers and Employability Centre playing a supporting and facilitating role.

The CEC Placements and Internships team has a well-established set of systems that we can customise for your requirements and make available for faculty, employers and students to use. It complies with all of the necessary legal and duty of care requirements.

**We use our online portal, CareerHub, to ensure that the placements meet the following legal requirements:**

- **Tier 4 Visa reporting and monitoring**
- **health and safety**
- **employment law; employer and opportunity suitability**
- **duty of care, equality and diversity**

We take great care to ensure that the systems are thorough but not over-burdensome to students, employers and faculty. They are proportionate to the level of risk of the placement, based on duration, location and the nature of work.

### **Support from the Careers and Employability Centre**

The Careers and Employability Centre is responsible for:

- advertising and promoting placement vacancies and events
- liaising with placements staff within the schools of study
- providing the student with advice and guidance on the placement process
- engaging with employers throughout the placement process
- providing resources for preparing the student for placement
- ensuring that the necessary paperwork is in place before the student begins placement
- providing support for course convenors
- mediating, if required, in any employment issues.

### **Schools of study**

Course convenors are responsible for:

- providing students with subject-specific preparation advice
- ensuring staff are familiar with the placements process and can communicate this to students
- ensuring that the legal and duty of care requirements are met, using the systems provided by CEC
- ensuring the suitability of the placement to meet the learning outcomes of the placement, once CEC has provided details of the role
- assessing the student's fitness to work off-campus.

During placement, course convenors should:

- provide feedback on any learning logs (see Section 4)
- visit the student during the placement if needed
- provide pastoral care to students on placement
  - guidance can be found here:  
<http://www.asetonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ASET-Good-Practice-Guide-2014.pdf>
  - a form to record your visit can be found here (Login required):  
<https://careerhub.sussex.ac.uk/Form.aspx?id=650964>

## **Students**

Students are responsible for:

- proactively researching and applying for placements; attending relevant events
- ensuring their emergency contact details are up-to-date on Sussex Direct
- adhering to terms and conditions of their contract as an employee of the external organisation
- actively engaging with their course convenor and raising any issues (including wellbeing)
- completing their on-placement learning logs on time
- completing any evaluations requested via their employer or the University.

### 3. Placement Preparation

The Careers and Employability Centre can help with preparing students for researching, sourcing and securing placements. Our online resource, CareerHub, has a searchable database of over 8,500 organisations in the UK and worldwide. We provide a comprehensive programme of events and web resources, many of which are suitable for postgraduates.

#### **Dedicated placement resources**

CEC provides the following resources and services for students. We may be able to build in course-specific workshops upon request:

- **placement vacancies** (online resource)
- **employer recruitment presentations, skills sessions** (events)
- **employer database with over 8,500 employers** (online resource)
- **careers information, including sector guides** (online resource)
- **CEC Core services:**
  - **advice appointments**
  - **information Centre**
  - **workshops**
  - **Sussex Skills Hub** <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/skillshub/>

## 4. Documentation

The Placements and Internships Team at CEC work with the student and their proposed employer to complete the compliance and monitoring forms. These ensure that the University fulfils its legal requirements and duty of care.

*Completion of the compliance and monitoring forms ensures that:*

- the University is satisfied that the placement work will be of a sufficient standard; that the placement presents a legitimate learning opportunity and will actively support and enhance the student's academic development
- the University has considered the student's health and safety in the workplace, investigated any issues that may arise, and put in measures to mitigate risks
- the employer and student are aware of their rights and responsibilities in the workplace
- daily supervision of the student is transferred to the workplace supervisor (although overall supervision remains with the school of study).

Should the student, employer or University run into difficulties during the placement, this agreement can be referred to by any party to clarify the terms of the placement.

### **Health and safety**

Students on placement continue to be registered at the University of Sussex, and we have a collective duty of care to these students. Whilst they are also an employee or volunteer at the host organisation, placements remain an academic endeavour. The Head of School (or delegated representative) maintains responsibility for the student's health and safety while they are studying off-campus.

The CEC Placements and Internships Team can gather together the health and safety and risk information, and send to the Head of School (or named representative) to approve the placement on health and safety grounds. The Placements and Internships Team will discuss and raise any potential issues at the earliest possible opportunity. These include, but are not limited to:

- working in a remote or unfamiliar location
- working in a politically unstable country
- working with children, vulnerable adults, animals
- lone working and lone travelling for work.

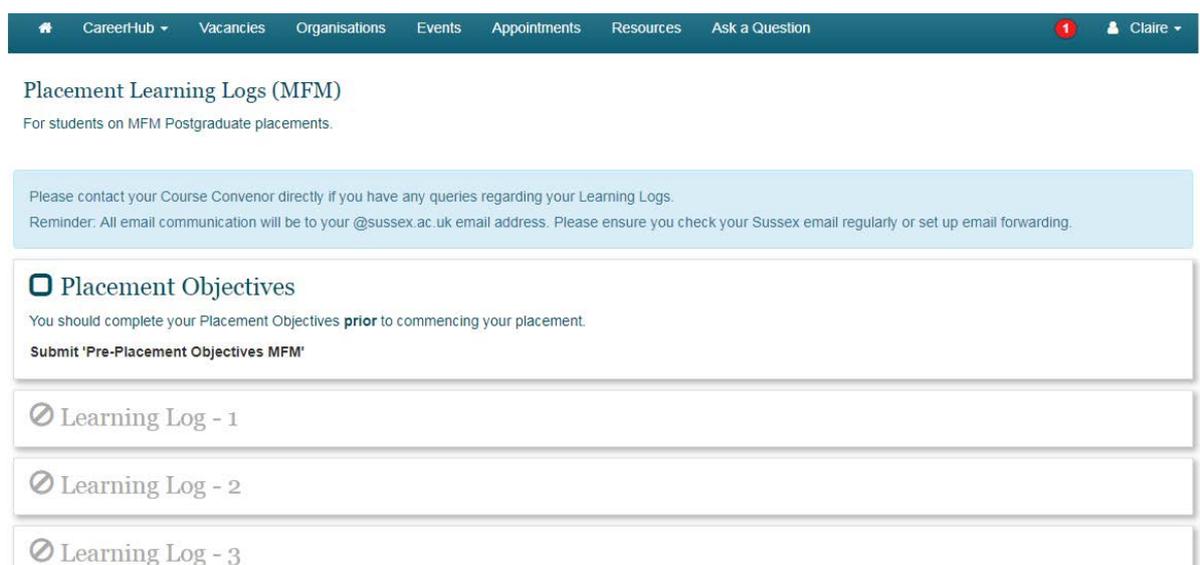
UK placements necessarily abide by Health and Safety Regulation. Office-based placements within the UK are of low risk.

## Learning logs

Placements are an excellent way for students to apply their knowledge to the workplace, and for workplace issues to inform their learning.

Best practice in work-based learning is that students should be given the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and how this contributes to their learning outcomes.

The Learning Log system within CEC's CareerHub fulfils this requirement, and is a valuable resource for students and faculty. We can design and build a custom system for your course and your students – please see the example below developed for the School of Media, Film and Music postgraduate placements.



The screenshot shows the CareerHub interface for Placement Learning Logs (MFM). The navigation bar includes links for CareerHub, Vacancies, Organisations, Events, Appointments, Resources, and Ask a Question. A notification badge with the number '1' and the user name 'Claire' are visible. The main content area is titled 'Placement Learning Logs (MFM)' and includes a sub-header 'For students on MFM Postgraduate placements.' A light blue information box contains the text: 'Please contact your Course Convenor directly if you have any queries regarding your Learning Logs. Reminder: All email communication will be to your @sussex.ac.uk email address. Please ensure you check your Sussex email regularly or set up email forwarding.' Below this, there are four sections: 'Placement Objectives' with a 'Submit 'Pre-Placement Objectives MFM'' button, and three 'Learning Log' entries labeled 'Learning Log - 1', 'Learning Log - 2', and 'Learning Log - 3', each with a circular icon containing a diagonal slash.

Students on placements of over two weeks must have their attendance monitored by the school. This is particularly important with international students on a Tier 4 visa. The University needs to know that they are present at their workplace.

This is done through a combination of factors:

- the agreement form signed by the University, student and employer includes a clause whereby the employer must immediately inform the University of any absence without leave in the workplace
- students submitting, and receiving feedback, on reflective learning logs
- faculty member visits for longer placements (usually over six months).

## 5. Students on placement

The responsible faculty member should be in regular contact with their placement students. Common areas where concerns arise are:

*The student has health and wellbeing issues* - students may need extra support or guidance from you – you can also refer them to the Student Life Centre.

*The employer has concerns over the student's work or attendance* - you should seek to clarify the cause of this with the student.

Although it is a rare occurrence, sometimes students need to leave their placement before they have worked the full agreed term. These scenarios are dealt with on a case-by-case basis, but roles are distributed as follows:

**The responsible faculty member** should work with the student to ascertain the reason(s) that the student is unable to continue to work. It may be that with suitable intervention, they can continue on placement.

**CEC** is responsible for liaising with the employer. If there are concerns over the employer's conduct, we can advise future students that the organisation may be unsuitable.

If the student has no choice but to leave the placement, they have the option to:

- find suitable alternative work in order that they complete the minimum placement duration
- work with their course convenor to ascertain whether the experience that they have gained is sufficient for their intended academic use
- if time permits, return to their studies immediately and withdraw from the placement option.

### **Incomplete documentation**

If the required documentation is not complete before the student begins placement, CEC will inform the responsible faculty member and school office. You can then choose whether to:

- allow the student to continue on placement but the activity should be referred to the Head of School who may wish to consider placing it on the school's risk register. Please note that if the student is on a Tier 4 visa then the risk is high
- advise the student to terminate their placement immediately
- mark the student as absent and decline to accredit their placement.

## 6. FAQs and further resources

### Questions frequently asked by students

#### **Can I do a placement abroad?**

Yes – the University supports students working internationally. Students who wish to work outside the UK need to be proactive in their job search, and seek advice from CEC at the earliest opportunity. It is the student and employer's responsibility to ensure that the student is in possession of the correct working visa to cover their placement.

Students will also need to ensure that they have travel insurance that covers them for the duration of their trip. CEC asks students to verify that they have insurance as part of the monitoring procedure, but cannot advise on particular policies.

#### **Can international students undertake a placement?**

Yes, provided that the placement is no more than 50% of their degree. International students may need to extend their Tier 4 visa (see below), and inform International Student Support of their placement.

During the placement, students will remain registered at Sussex. Student Systems has to provide details of the work placement to UKVI and this is essential so students can work full-time, otherwise they will be in breach of their immigration conditions. Please see the 'Work Placements' section of International Student Support's website for more details:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/internationalstudent/support/working/workplacements>

#### **How do students know if they have to extend their visa?**

If the placement requires an extension to the dissertation, students may need to extend their Tier 4 visa. International Student Support can provide full guidance to individual students.

### Questions frequently asked by staff

#### **How is a postgraduate placement different to work experience/an internship?**

Internships take place during vacations or after the student graduates. Postgraduate students do not have a vacation period so any internships must take place after graduation.

A placement is:

- between 2 weeks and 6 months long, usually full-time work
- a work-based project or course-related work experience (rather than fieldwork where the primary objective is to gather research data)
- assessed in some way

#### **How much payment should students receive?**

At a postgraduate level, placements are unlikely to be paid – this is within the law, but only if the work is an assessed part of the degree programme.

**Is there any support available for my department?**

The CEC Placements and Internships Team provide the systems for pre- and on-placement activity. We can train you and/or a member of your team to use the systems and documents – they meet our legal and pastoral obligations, and many of the processes are automated.

**What should I do if the proposed placement is over 6 months?**

You must refer placements over 6 months to the Student Systems and Records Office. CEC can do this on your behalf if you wish.

**What are the alternatives to placements?**

If the student is working in their free time then the University does not have the same legal responsibilities to assure their safety, and the academic requirements are no longer a concern. Postgraduates do not have vacation time, so this effectively means that the role must be undertaken part-time (20 hours per week or less).

Placements which are part of a course do not have to be paid by the employer, however part-time jobs must legally be paid at minimum wage.

If you have encouraged students to undertake a part-time opportunity outside of the placements framework and any issues arise (for example, the student comes to harm or experiences discrimination), then they may take legal action. When opportunities are routed through the placements process then the University has institutional responsibility.

## 7. Useful resources

### Standards and Quality

ASET (Professional body for work-based learning) <http://www.asetonline.org>

The University has an institutional membership. If you would like to be added to their mailing list, including details of training and development opportunities, please email [placements@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:placements@sussex.ac.uk)

Best Practice Guide – Managing Work Based and Placement Learning:  
<http://www.asetonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ASET-Good-Practice-Guide-2014.pdf>

QAA <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>

Please refer to section B10 for managing Higher Education Provision with Others  
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-b>

UCEA (Universities & Colleges Employers Association) <http://www.ucea.ac.uk>

UCEA health and safety guidance for the placement of HE students  
<http://www.ucea.ac.uk/en/publications/index.cfm/HSplace>

### Placements information and student resources

Careers and Employability Centre: Applying for Masters postgraduate placements [.doc]  
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/careers/documents/masters-postgraduate-placements-application-advice.pdf>

Careers and Employability Centre services for postgraduate students  
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/careers/services/taughtpostgrads>

### Employment, placements and the law

Payment for placements work (www.gov.uk)  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-minimum-wage-work-experience-and-internships>

Minimum wage (www.gov.uk)  
<https://www.gov.uk/minimum-wage-different-types-work>

## 8. Glossary

### **Internship**

An internship is a short-term work experience, which is **not** part of the student's course. Postgraduate students can only undertake an internship once their course has ended.

### **Learning logs**

Students can submit regular reflective logs detailing their experience on placement and what they have learned. It allows them to chart their professional development through placement.

Course convenors can provide feedback on these reflective logs. They allow the convenors to provide advice and guidance on avenues to explore in the workplace.

### **Agreement forms**

The University requires that a tripartite agreement between the employer, student and University, is signed and stored securely and centrally. This document contains details of each individual student, placement role and employer.

### **Placement**

A period of work in an external organisation, embedded into their degree. Usually the student is required to submit a piece of work, which the University assesses.