

**Code of practice for the assurance of academic  
quality and standards in higher education**

**Section 9: Work-based and placement learning - September 2007**

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2007

First published 2001

Second edition 2007

ISBN 978 1 84482 752 7

All QAA's publications are available on our website [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

Printed copies of current publications are available from:

Linney Direct

Adamsway

Mansfield

NG18 4FN

Tel 01623 450788

Fax 01623 450481

Email [qaa@linneydirect.com](mailto:qaa@linneydirect.com)

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

---

## Contents

Foreword	1
Introduction	4
Precepts and explanations	9
General principles	9
Responsibilities	12
Information, support and guidance	17
Staff development	19
Monitoring and evaluation	20
Appendix 1: the precepts	22
Appendix 2: publications and organisations related to work-based and placement learning	25
Appendix 3: mapping section 9 precepts to other sections of the <i>Code of practice</i>	27
Appendix 4: membership of the advisory group for the <i>Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning</i>	29



### Foreword

1 This document is the second edition of a code of practice for work-based and placement learning in programmes awarded by United Kingdom (UK) higher education institutions. It is one of a suite of interrelated documents, which forms an overall *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*) for the guidance of higher education institutions subscribing to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and other bodies offering UK higher education.

2 The overall *Code of practice* and its 10 constituent sections were originally prepared by QAA between 1998 and 2001 in response to the reports of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education and its Scottish Committee (the *Dearing and Garrick Reports*). The *Code of practice* supports the national arrangements within the UK for quality assurance in higher education. It identifies a comprehensive series of system-wide principles (precepts) covering matters relating to the management of academic quality and standards in higher education. It provides an authoritative reference point for institutions as they consciously, actively and systematically assure the academic quality and standards of their programmes, awards and qualifications.

3 The *Code of practice* assumes that, taking into account principles and practices agreed UK-wide, each institution has its own systems for independent verification both of its quality and standards and of the effectiveness of its quality assurance systems. In developing the *Code of practice*, extensive advice has been sought from a range of knowledgeable practitioners.

4 The *Code of practice* does not incorporate statutory requirements relating to relevant legislation, for example the *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001*. It assumes that institutions have an overriding obligation in all such cases to ensure that they meet the requirements of legislation. However, where a section of the *Code of practice* is related to legislative or similar obligations, efforts have been made to ensure compatibility with them.

5 Since 2001, a number of developments in UK higher education have encouraged QAA to begin a revision of individual sections of the *Code of practice*. In undertaking this task, QAA has also decided to review the structure of the sections and, in particular, to replace the original 'precepts and guidance' format with a 'precepts and explanation' approach, using the explanations to make clear why the precepts are considered important and reducing opportunities for a 'checklist' approach to the *Code of practice*. In doing so, QAA has sought to meet Recommendation 4 (part 4) of the Better Regulation Task Force in its report *Higher Education: Easing the Burden*, July 2002. This revised section has also taken account of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*.

6 Revised sections of the *Code of practice* are therefore now structured into a series of precepts and accompanying explanations. The precepts express key matters of principle that the higher education community has identified as important for the assurance of quality and academic standards. Individual institutions should be able to demonstrate they are addressing the matters tackled by the precepts effectively, through their own management and organisational processes, taking account of institutional needs, traditions, culture and decision-making. The accompanying explanations show why the precepts are important.

7 The *Code of practice* is a statement of good practice that has been endorsed by the higher education community. As such, it is useful in QAA's audit and review processes to consider the extent to which an institution, in developing and implementing its own policies, has taken account of the *Code of practice* and its precepts.

8 Institutions may find the explanations useful for developing their own policy and for allowing some flexibility of practice at subject level, depending on local needs. It is important to emphasise that the explanations do not form part of QAA's expectations of institutional practice when QAA teams are conducting audits and reviews.

9 Academic staff in departments and schools do not necessarily need to be familiar with the detail of all of the various sections of the *Code of practice*, although they might well be expected to be familiar with the institutional policies it informs and any parts which are particularly relevant to their own responsibilities.

10 To assist users, the precepts are listed, without the accompanying explanations, in Appendix 1 of this section of the *Code of practice*.

11 The first version of this section of the *Code of practice* was published in July 2001. The publication of this second version follows consultation with staff in institutions, who have helped to update the *Code of practice* to take account of institutions' practical experience of using the guidance contained in its predecessor.

### Introduction

12 The second version of this section of the *Code of practice* provides a set of precepts, with accompanying guidance, on arrangements for work-based and/or placement learning. It is concerned with arrangements made for identified and agreed learning that typically takes place outside a higher education institution.

13 Work-based or placement learning is usually undertaken as part, and very occasionally the whole, of a programme of study. Arrangements to provide work-based and placement learning involve a wide range of partners. An awarding institution's relationship with its partner(s) can vary in terms of the nature of the learning opportunities provided. The nature of the relationship may also depend on the partner's purposes for engaging in the provision of work-based learning or placements. For example, an employer that is using work-based learning as a means of improving the skills and knowledge of the workforce may have a different relationship with the awarding institution to an employer providing work-based placements for a full-time student(s).

14 Such reasonable variations make it difficult to provide a precise and formal definition of the terms work-based and placement learning. It could be argued that the provision of a formal definition might even be counter-productive and act as a constraint to the further development of innovative practice in this area. It is for each institution to decide what it understands by, and how it will use the terms. It is important that each institution ensures that the terms are understood as intended by all of their partners, as well as within their own institution. Institutions may find it useful to draw upon the extensive literature that is available about work-based and placement learning at higher levels (see Appendix 2).

15 For the purposes of this publication, however, work-based learning is regarded as learning that is integral to a higher education programme and is usually achieved and demonstrated through engagement with a workplace environment, the assessment of reflective practice and the designation of appropriate learning

outcomes. Institutions can draw upon and make use of personal development planning and/or accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL). Work-based learning is often accredited, ranging from a single module within a programme to an entire programme that includes, at its core, activities and learning outcomes designed around the individual's occupation, whether paid or unpaid.

16 Placement learning is regarded, for the purpose of this publication, as the learning achieved during an agreed and negotiated period of learning that takes place outside the institution at which the full or part-time student is enrolled or engaged in learning. As with work-based learning, the learning outcomes are intended as integral parts of a programme of study. It is important that each student is supported by the institution throughout his/her placement experience, to ensure that specific learning related to the programme can be achieved.

17 The *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* covers **general** arrangements for provision leading to an award, or to specific credit towards an award of an awarding institution, which is delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through an arrangement with another body (or bodies). Work-based and placement learning have become increasingly important elements of many higher education institutions' activities. They involve particular forms of collaboration and can involve a variety of arrangements, for example between a higher education institution and one or more other bodies, or between a student and a work-based or placement provider. Section 9 of the *Code of practice* is intended to provide guidance on these **specific** aspects of a higher education award and to support such arrangements where they are a pre-determined and integral part of the award, and where their learning outcomes clearly contribute to its overall aims.

18 There are forms of provision to which the general guidance of Section 2 and the specific guidance of Section 9 might both be relevant. It is for an institution itself to assess the quality assurance

needs and risks of such provision in the light of the relevant precepts in both sections of the *Code of practice*. The object of doing so is to enable the institution to have continuing confidence in the effectiveness of the management of the quality of its provision and the security of the academic standards of its awards.

19 There is also increasing interest in, and development of, work-based and placement learning that is of demonstrable value in its own right but is, at its outset, not planned as an integral part of a larger programme/award. The underpinning values and expectations regarding provision of such opportunities will be similar but in such instances, it may not be either relevant or possible to demonstrate the potential coherence of such learning within any larger programme of work or higher education award. In these cases, it may subsequently be possible to consider opportunities for aggregation of relevant learning outcomes suitable for (other) higher education awards. The *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review* provides some guidance, although it may be that additional guidance relating to the quality assurance for subsequent aggregation of formally assessed (although not necessarily formally delivered) learning will be required.

20 Negotiated and agreed periods of placement within a programme have been the dominant form of learning from work-based experience for higher education students for a number of years. Whilst they remain part of many long-standing programmes, current and likely future opportunities will enable students to integrate learning from work and study in a greater variety of, and more flexible, ways. This publication recognises the considerable developments that have taken place in recent years in the opportunities for the integration of work-based and placement learning within higher education programmes and at all levels of higher education.

21 Increasingly, there are opportunities for individuals in a workplace to negotiate, with an awarding institution or a learning provider, and often their employer, a programme of study developed from their work. There are also more opportunities for full-time

students to gain experience and learn through the work environment by undertaking a work placement, and for students to have a period of study overseas. Students involved in this type of learning are likely to have different needs to those on campus full-time.

22 Higher education institutions are responsible for the quality and coherence of the higher education programmes they offer and the standards of their awards but they may, through formal collaborative arrangements, devolve aspects of the delivery of their programmes to other partners. The range of partners can include, for example, a further education college or another higher education institution (hereafter called the learning provider); an employer or other organisation offering a work-based or placement learning opportunity (referred to in this publication as the work-based or placement provider); or an employer supporting its employee(s) on a higher education programme where the workplace is used as a learning environment. An employer may also be involved in mentoring, supporting and assessing the student. The guidance provided in this publication is intended to support the awarding institution in managing such arrangements. It is expected that awarding bodies will use the guidance provided in this section of the *Code of practice* on a programme-by-programme basis and in ways that are appropriate to their context.

23 Work-based or placement learning opportunities can take place outside the UK, through schemes such as Erasmus, as well as language and sandwich courses. Planning these will involve full consideration and due diligence of relevant regulations and policies of the host country, with application of this section of the *Code of practice* and reflecting the academic and cultural conditions of any host country. This may require careful judgement in the interpretation and application of the precepts, with regard to, for example, different national and regional contexts, risk assessment, health and safety, and the duty of care to the student and accident reporting. The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) provides guidance for institutions on issues related to risk assessment of student activity abroad (see Appendix 2).

24 The agreed intended learning outcomes for a work-based or placement learning experience may be highly specific or more general. They may, for example, embrace the demonstration of learning and the development of higher level practical and intellectual skills, such as innovation and enterprise, that are required for professional or other employment, or they may be more general, for example, the development of an understanding of the cultural or employment context of an academic discipline.

25 Work-based and placement learning, wherever and however organised and delivered, should widen learning opportunities without prejudice either to the academic standard of the award being sought or the quality of what is offered to students. Furthermore, the arrangements for assuring quality and standards should be as rigorous, secure and open to scrutiny as those for programmes provided wholly within the institution and through conventional class-based modes of teaching and learning.

26 The sharing of good practice in work-based and placement learning, locally and nationally, can be of benefit to all of those involved and contribute towards progressive improvements. Such sharing can be achieved through the work of a number of organisations. Appendix 2 provides links to some of them.

27 Other sections of the *Code of practice*, publications by QAA and other organisations involved in work-based or placement learning may be useful references. See Appendix 2 for a list of references.

## Precepts and explanations

### General principles

1

Where work-based or placement learning is part of a programme of study, awarding institutions ensure that its learning outcomes are:

- clearly identified
- contribute to the overall and coherent aims of their programme
- are assessed appropriately.

### Intended learning outcomes

Work-based and placement learning is not restricted to undertaking work experience or going on a placement. It is primarily concerned with identifying relevant and appropriately assessed learning, expressed in the form of learning outcomes, that can be linked to that work or placement. Agreeing the intended learning outcomes for a module or programme is an integral part of programme design and is normally the responsibility of the awarding institution, sometimes working with its partners. In agreeing intended learning outcomes, consideration is given to a range of relevant external reference points that are available for the assurance of standards, including QAA's Academic Infrastructure, the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, National Occupational Standards, Sector Skills Council Foundation Degree frameworks and other qualifications frameworks.

The means by which learning outcomes can be agreed, and achieved, need to be flexible to accommodate the diversity of students and learning opportunities. Learning outcomes are designed with the overall aims of a programme in mind together with any professional practice-based standards and requirements. Where appropriate, institutions are encouraged to consider including learning outcomes that can be aligned to specific professional

practice-based standards and requirements within the work-based or placement learning opportunity, for example, the standards set by the Health Professions Council.

In common with other elements of a programme, it may not be possible for all students in work-based or placement learning situations to have exactly the same learning experiences. It is important, however, that they all have opportunities to achieve the same learning outcomes, and that support is provided for the student if circumstances change and s/he is no longer able to achieve the outcomes in the agreed setting(s).

Various forms of agreed learning outcomes can contribute to the proper integration of work-based learning into a programme. In identifying the specific learning outcomes for a programme that includes work-based or placement learning, an awarding institution considers the extent to which that part of the programme contributes to the overall learning outcomes of the programme, and the extent to which the learning is integrated. Such considerations may include:

- whether the learning outcomes of the work-based or placement learning are clear and specifically designed
- whether the student has had adequate/appropriate opportunities to achieve the intended learning outcomes during the work-based or placement learning
- what impact an optional or compulsory work-based or placement learning component has on the intended learning outcomes of the programme as a whole.

Many awarding institutions assign a credit value to sets of learning outcomes, including those linked to work-based and placement learning. The credit value indicates both 'how much' (the amount) of learning is expected and 'how hard' (the relative level of difficulty) it is. The allocation of credit to sets of learning outcomes and its award to students for achieving those outcomes, is covered by an institution's quality assurance procedures.

### Assessment

All types of learning, including work-based and placement learning, must be appropriately and formally assessed if they are to be formally recognised. Awarding institutions, normally in consultation with their partners, determine the type(s) and frequency of student assessment in work-based and placement learning. It is important that the assessments are designed to test whether the particular agreed learning outcomes have been achieved.

Assessment strategies that include an emphasis on supporting student learning, as well as measuring achievement of academic standards, can improve students' learning experience. Well-designed assessment can help to reinforce the relevance of the work-based or placement learning to other parts of the programme and vice versa, and give students a range of opportunities to demonstrate achievement of their learning. In designing assessment for contexts where the learning and/or the assessment takes place 'off campus', it is important that any assessment tests the intended learning outcomes both accurately and fairly.

It is important that the impact of failure or non-completion of any work-based or placement learning on progression within an overall programme, and the provision of reassessment opportunities, are considered when developing the assessment strategy.

External examiners play an important part in assuring the standards of awards and the quality of learning opportunities, including those appropriate to work-based or placement learning. The commentary provided by the external examiner on the work-based or placement learning elements of a programme makes an important contribution to assuring the standards of the programme. Awarding institutions and partners may wish to refer to the *Code of practice, Section 4: External examining*.

It may also be agreed that employers may have a designated role in the assessment of the student's work-based or placement learning, but it is important that all of those involved in the formal assessment

of students are competent to fulfil their roles and understand their responsibilities. Training provided by the awarding institution can help to ensure that this role is carried out effectively. It may be important, therefore, to ensure that standard institutional practices take account of the particular requirements of those awards that include work-based or placement learning and that the awarding institution has oversight of all those who are involved in such assessment, including the moderation of assessment and the participation of assessors in decisions about credit and awards.

Students, in particular those in current or recent employment, can bring a range of experience and knowledge to their studies. Where that experience and knowledge matches identified learning outcomes, awarding institutions may wish to consider the extent to which APEL may be applicable. Reference to the *Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning* may be useful.

The *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* and the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students* may be helpful references for this precept.

## Responsibilities

### Responsibilities for academic standards and quality

#### 2

**Awarding institutions are responsible for the academic standards of their awards and the quality of provision leading to them, and have in place policies and procedures to ensure that their responsibilities, and those of their partners involved in work-based and placement learning, are clearly identified and met.**

The design of higher education programmes that include work-based or placement learning can involve a number of partners in addition to the awarding institution. However, the academic standards of a higher education award and assuring the quality of student learning opportunities are the sole responsibility of the awarding institution.

An awarding institution may delegate responsibility for aspects of a programme, where it has confidence that a partner, such as a learning provider or employer, has the capacity to accept and discharge that responsibility. Employers are often involved in jointly supporting students work-based or placement learning. Such shared responsibilities can work well so long as there is clarity about who is responsible for what. An awarding institution, together with its partner(s), may consider how devolved or shared responsibilities can be organised and clearly identified. This may be achieved through, for example, memoranda of understanding, service level agreements, the provision of handbooks for students, employers, providers and staff, and learning contracts. Clarity about responsibilities is important as the student learning is usually taking place away from the premises of the learning provider.

It is particularly important when organising work-based or placement opportunities overseas. The *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* is a relevant reference, in particular Part B: Aspects specific to flexible and distributed learning.

Clearly defined policies and procedures for securing, approving and/or allocating work-based or placement learning help an awarding institution ensure that, where applicable, any partner providing a learning opportunity can deliver these appropriately and has the capacity and capability to assist students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

In providing a work-based or placement opportunity abroad, awarding institutions and their partners should take account of relevant legislation appropriate to the country where the opportunity is being undertaken, to ensure that they can meet their duty of care towards the student. Guidance provided by UKCISA may be helpful.

Sometimes, however, the work environment may not provide the appropriate learning opportunity, for example, where a student is using his/her existing workplace principally as the 'site' for their work-based learning but the employer is not aware of this nor

willing to be involved. In such circumstances, the awarding institution will need to consider, maybe at the stage of admission to the programme, the suitability of the activity in terms of whether learning outcomes can be successfully demonstrated, and how the student is going to be supported.

Successful achievement of work-based or placement learning generally depends on the full commitment of all partners. It is, however, sometimes necessary for one or more of the partners to terminate an arrangement. Awarding institutions need to have policies and procedures in place to cover such eventualities. These include the provision of guidance and support for the student in such circumstances, and identification of how the student will be able to continue with their programme of study and have the opportunity to demonstrate the required learning outcomes. Such policies and procedures should be agreed at the outset of any partnership providing work-based and placement learning opportunities.

### Responsibilities of partners

#### 3

**Awarding institutions ensure that all partners providing work-based and placement learning opportunities are fully aware of their related and specific responsibilities, and that the learning opportunities provided by them are appropriate.**

Partnerships that provide work-based or placement learning opportunities for students can be structured in various ways.

An awarding institution sets out how it expects the responsibilities associated with each work-based or placement learning experience to be undertaken and achieved. A memorandum of understanding or other types of formal agreement can assure the awarding institution that the work-based or placement provider understands, agrees to and is able to demonstrate its ability to fulfil its responsibilities under relevant legislation. Such an agreement will take into account the level of skill and experience of the student and

where the opportunity takes place, particularly if the opportunity is overseas. It should in all cases be clear and understood by all partners where responsibility lies for, among other things, the provision of appropriate learning opportunities, the health and safety of students, and, where delegated by the awarding institution, any assessment of students. A risk assessment can provide the assurance that the awarding institution needs prior to agreeing the work-based or placement learning opportunity.

The nature of the work-based or placement setting, and the student's employment status with the partner, may have a bearing on the applicable legislation and whether the awarding institution or the partner(s) is identified as the 'responsible authority'. Awarding institutions are responsible for identifying and clarifying these responsibilities and duties with their partners and seeking legal advice if appropriate.

### Responsibilities and entitlements of students

#### 4

#### **Awarding institutions inform students of their specific responsibilities and entitlements relating to their work-based and placement learning.**

Students undertaking work-based or placement learning have entitlements as individuals, as well as obligations and responsibilities towards the awarding institution, learning provider, and to others such as customers, clients, service users, other employees and the general public. Students have a responsibility to meet the norms and expectations for professional conduct in the particular field of work or study that they are undertaking through the work-based or placement learning including those students who are on an overseas placement. For example, students on health-related practice must conduct themselves and practice within an ethical framework. For those students using their existing workplace for their work-based learning, such norms, expectations and responsibilities are often covered in an employment contract and may be more obvious than for students joining a workplace to undertake a placement.

It is helpful for students if these norms, responsibilities and expectations are clearly stated and understood at the outset of the work-based or placement learning opportunity. Students should be made aware of their entitlements to, for example, work in a safe environment and to be treated in accordance with applicable legislation, as well as being fully informed of their responsibilities, including those under statutory legislation covering, for example, the need for client or patient confidentiality, intellectual property rights and data protection.

Awarding institutions can provide students with a range of information on their entitlements and responsibilities, including the conduct expected of the student by the institution, the level of student autonomy, and the nature and scope of learning support available from the awarding institution and its partner(s) at different times before, during and after the work-based or placement learning opportunity.

It is likely that during the work-based or placement learning, students will take on the responsibility for managing their own learning and professional relationships, and for tracking and recording their own progress and achievements. To help in the process of managing their own learning, students may consider personal development planning and learning logs, which may ideally have already been started, under guidance in the institution. To support this, learning agreements can be developed prior to the work-based or placement opportunity.

It is important that the partners involved in the work-based or placement learning agree how they will provide each other with an early warning of potential problems that may prevent students' progress or satisfactory completion of their learning outcomes. Students should be informed of the procedures that they should follow and whom they should contact if problems occur.

## Information, support and guidance

### Students

5

**Awarding institutions provide students with appropriate and timely information, support and guidance prior to, throughout and following their work-based and placement learning.**

There is a wide range of information, support and guidance on work-based or placement learning opportunities that can be selected according to both the nature and type(s) of opportunities being provided and the students involved. All students, whether full- or part-time, undertaking distance learning or on an overseas placement, benefit from having information about the level and amount of guidance and support available to them, how they can access it, who will be providing it, the frequency that such support may be available and who to contact in the case of an emergency.

Support and guidance can be both academic and/or personal. Academic support can include guidance on academic performance; personal support may include technical support, counselling and careers advice and, for overseas placement students, advice on the culture of the overseas location, on finding accommodation, insurance and travel information. Students can also be provided with information about the rights to intellectual property developed during a work-based or placement opportunity and whether or not this is covered by a contract of employment.

Information, support and guidance materials developed in consultation with partners are more likely to fulfil the students' needs, reduce duplication and ensure that appropriate, consistent and timely information is available to students at all stages of their work-based or placement opportunity. Similarly, how support and guidance will be provided can be discussed and agreed between the awarding institution and any partners.

The needs of students differ depending on whether they are yet to begin the work-based or placement learning, are undertaking it, or have completed it. For example, full- or part-time students returning to complete their programme after a placement learning opportunity or an overseas placement may appreciate support to ensure that their experience is integrated into the programme, and how their reflections on their experience can be used for future students undertaking the same placement learning opportunity.

Students may also benefit from having information provided by the awarding institution about the procedures they should follow if they have a problem or complaint about their work-based learning/placement. The *Code of practice, Section 5: Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters* can provide further guidance on issues that should be considered.

### Partners

#### 6

**Awarding institutions ensure that work-based and placement learning partners are provided with appropriate and timely information prior to, throughout and following the students' work-based and placement learning.**

The amount, range, format and timing of information and guidance an awarding institution provides to its work-based or placement providers is important.

Work-based or placement providers are encouraged to play an active role in the opportunities provided for the student. To support them in this role they need clear information from the awarding institution about the objectives of the work-based or placement learning, their particular roles and responsibilities, the nature and scope of the activity involved and how responsibilities are to be fulfilled. They will benefit from guidance about their involvement in the procedures for the monitoring of the progress of students and mechanisms for reporting to the awarding institution at the end of the work-based or placement learning opportunity.

A work-based or placement provider may be involved in providing a mentoring or supervising role. The responsibilities of these important roles need to be clearly identified and any training for the mentor or supervisor provided before the student begins the opportunity.

It is good practice for an awarding institution to inform the work-based or placement provider about visits from the academic or support staff, and any change(s) in the student's circumstances, in advance of the experience commencing.

Work-based or placement providers find it helpful to have clear information about action to be taken if they are no longer able to offer a work-based or placement learning opportunity or if they have any kind of problem or complaint concerning the conduct of the student.

### Staff development

7

**Awarding institutions ensure that:**

- **their staff involved in work-based and placement learning are appropriately qualified, resourced and competent to fulfil their role(s)**
- **where applicable, other educational providers, work-based and placement learning partners have effective measures in place to monitor and assure the proficiency of their staff involved in the support of the relevant work-based and placement learning.**

The level and mix of staff expertise required to identify, develop, maintain, monitor and evaluate an awarding institution's work-based or placement learning policies and procedures, are important. In considering such factors, awarding institutions need to have a strategy for how their staff will be appropriately appointed, trained and supported to undertake the role. Such assurance can be extended to include confidence that partner(s) strategies are appropriate to assure the proficiency of its own staff and that necessary staff development needs are provided.

Staff of the awarding institution, other learning providers, and those employed in the work-based or placement learning setting, all have crucial roles in identifying, developing and maintaining appropriate learning opportunities and supporting students. They need to be informed about the awarding institution's policies and procedures for assuring the quality of learning intended to be derived from the experience.

In some circumstances, for example in nursing and midwifery, there is a requirement that students are supported in their practice learning by those who are 'appropriately qualified'. It is therefore important that these requirements are satisfied before the student commences any practice placement.

All staff associated with supporting students during the work-based or placement learning work better if they have clearly and explicitly defined roles, and are given appropriate training to undertake these effectively. Such training may include updating staff knowledge and understanding of relevant legislation, institutional policies and practices.

### Monitoring and evaluation

#### 8

**Awarding institutions have policies and procedures for securing, monitoring, administering and reviewing work-based and placement learning that are effective and reviewed regularly.**

Work-based and placement learning opportunities can be dynamic and flexible, and contribute significantly to a student's learning experience, the programmes offered by the awarding institution, and the activities of the work-based or placement provider. Regular and effective monitoring and review of such opportunities helps all involved to gain maximum benefit from them, contribute towards enhancement, inform future developments and contribute to the improvement of future relationships between partners.

Clear procedures which allow feedback on the quality and standards of the work-based or placement learning to be available to and used by all partners, enable institutions and work-based learning or placement providers to identify and take appropriate and timely action, where necessary, and provide opportunities to note effective practices.

Such feedback may be obtained from providers in a number of ways. These can include, for example, regular meetings between the awarding institution and any learning providers, the employer representative(s), and the student, as well as questionnaires and focus groups which can be used to gain the views of all those involved. Discussion to agree the most effective and appropriate methods of obtaining and providing feedback is likely to be most effective if undertaken at the beginning of any new work-based or placement agreement, and these methods should be periodically reviewed.

Feedback from institutional staff engaged with work-based and placement learning, and also from supervisors/mentors, external examiners and students is valuable in monitoring and reviewing both the effectiveness of the institution's policies and procedures for work-based or placement learning, and also about the quality and standards of its provision.

### **Appendix 1: the precepts**

(Note: the precepts are printed here without explanatory text for ease of reference.)

#### **General principles**

**1**

Where work-based or placement learning is part of a programme of study, awarding institutions ensure that its intended learning outcomes are:

- clearly identified
- contribute to the overall and coherent aims of their programme
- are assessed appropriately.

#### **Responsibilities**

##### **Responsibilities for academic standards and quality**

**2**

Awarding institutions are responsible for the academic standards of their awards and the quality of provision leading to them, and have in place policies and procedures to ensure that their responsibilities, and those of their partners involved in work-based and placement learning, are clearly identified and met.

##### **Responsibilities of partners**

**3**

Awarding institutions ensure that all partners providing work-based and placement learning opportunities are fully aware of their related and specific responsibilities, and that the learning opportunities provided by them are appropriate.

## Responsibilities and entitlements of students

4

Awarding institutions inform students of their specific responsibilities and entitlements relating to their work-based and placement learning.

## Information support and guidance

### Students

5

Awarding institutions provide students with appropriate and timely information, support and guidance prior to, throughout and following their work-based and placement learning.

### Partners

6

Awarding institutions ensure that work-based and placement learning partners are provided with appropriate and timely information prior to, throughout and following the students' work-based and placement learning.

## Staff development

7

Awarding institutions ensure that:

- their staff involved in work-based and placement learning are appropriately qualified, resourced and competent to fulfil their role(s)
- where applicable, other educational providers, work-based and placement learning partners have effective measures in place to monitor and assure the proficiency of their staff involved in the support of the relevant work-based and placement learning.

### Monitoring and evaluation

**8**

Awarding institutions have policies and procedures for securing, monitoring, administering and reviewing work-based and placement learning that are used effectively and reviewed regularly.

## **Appendix 2: publications and organisations related to work-based and placement learning**

Sections of QAA's *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*. These are:

- *Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*
- *Section 3: Students with disabilities*
- *Section 4: External examining*
- *Section 5: Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters*
- *Section 6: Assessment of students*
- *Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review.*

Other relevant QAA publications:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*
- *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland*
- *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*
- *Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning*
- *Guidelines for preparing programme specifications.*

Guidance in the publications of other bodies:

- Association for Sandwich Education and Training (ASET):  
*A Code of Good Practice for the Operation of the Placement Element of Sandwich Courses in Higher Education* [www.asetonline.org](http://www.asetonline.org)
- Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Work Based Learning at Middlesex University  
[www.middlesex.ac.uk/study/wbl/cfe](http://www.middlesex.ac.uk/study/wbl/cfe)

- Foundation Degree Forward (*fdf*) [www.fdf.ac.uk](http://www.fdf.ac.uk)
- General Social Care Council: Quality assurance benchmark statement and guidance on the monitoring of practice learning opportunities [www.gsc.org.uk](http://www.gsc.org.uk)
- The Higher Education Academy [www.heacademy.ac.uk](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk)
- Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer: *SEEC Notes for Guidance on Work-Related Learning* [www.seec.org.uk](http://www.seec.org.uk)
- UKCISA: UK Council for International Student Affairs [www.ukcisa.org.uk](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk)
- Universities Association for Continuing Education Work Based Learning Network [www.uace.gcal.ac.uk/links.html](http://www.uace.gcal.ac.uk/links.html)

### Appendix 3: mapping section 9 precepts to other sections of the *Code of practice*

Section 9: Work-based and placement learning	Other sections of the <i>Code of practice</i>						
	Section 2 precepts	Section 3 precepts	Section 4 precepts	Section 5 precepts	Section 6 precepts	Section 7 precepts	Section 8 precepts
Precept 1: Intended learning outcomes and assessment	A2, A10, A12, A14, A18, A20, A21, A22, A23	Under review during 2007/08	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11		1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10	1, 5	Under review during 2007/08
Precept 2: Responsibilities for academic standards and quality	A1, A3, A9, A10						
Precept 3: Responsibilities of partners	A3, A9, A10, A12						
Precept 4: Responsibilities and entitlements of students	A26, A27, B4						

Section 9: Work-based and placement learning	Other sections of the Code of practice							
	Section 2 precepts	Section 3 precepts	Section 4 precepts	Section 5 precepts	Section 6 precepts	Section 7 precepts	Section 8 precepts	
Precept 5: Information, support and guidance for students	A26, B4, B5, B6, B7			4, 7	5, 9, 12			
Precept 6: Information, support and guidance for partners								
Precept 7: Staff development	A17, B6				10			
Precept 8: Monitoring and development	A16, B2, B5		12, 13			7, 10		

**Appendix 4: membership of the advisory group for the Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning**

Janet Bohrer	Developmental Officer, QAA
Paul Burnand	Policy Consultant (VET Development and Reform), Sector Skills Development Agency
Euros Evans	Manager Careers Centre/Project Director, GO Wales, University of Glamorgan
Professor Jonathan Garnett	Director Centre for Excellence in Work Based Learning/Acting, Director Institute for Work Based Learning, Middlesex University
Dorothy Haslehurst	Associate Dean Academic, University of Portsmouth. Chair of SEEC
Susan Hayday	Curriculum and HE Manager, Association of Colleges
Alice Hynes	Executive Secretary, GuildHE
Brenda Little	Principal Policy Analyst, Centre for Higher Education Research and Information, The Open University
Professor Derek Longhurst	Chief Executive, Foundation Degree Forward
Professor Valerie Maehle	Dean, Faculty of Health and Social Care, The Robert Gordon University
Dr Jayne Mitchell	Assistant Director, QAA
Owen Richards	Academic Registrar, University of Sussex
Darren Scott	Head of Work Placement Centre, University of Leeds

## Work-based and placement learning

---

Andy Smith	Head Careers & Placements Service, Bournemouth University
Wendy Stubbs	Assistant Director, QAA
Professor Freda Tallantyre	Senior Associate, Higher Education Academy
Dr John J Wilson	University of Central Lancashire; Chairman of ASET: 'Integrating Work and Learning'



**The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education**

Southgate House  
Southgate Street  
Gloucester  
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000  
Fax 01452 557070  
Email [comms@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:comms@qaa.ac.uk)  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)