



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



# Health and Safety Guidance for the Placement of University Students

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This document has been designed to be accessible for readers. However, should you require the document in an alternative format please contact the Academic Quality Directorate.

**Related Documents / Forms / Templates**

- Guidance Notes for Students on Placements
- Guidance for the Assessment of Placements (Health and Safety)
- Placement Health and Safety Checklist
- Example Record Sheet
- Example Letter to Employer
- Example Letter to Student giving Authority to start Placement
- Student Induction Checklist

## Executive Summary

- 1 This document is intended to reduce the likelihood of students suffering harm, through the use of reasonable precautions. It also shows how we as a University can discharge the duties demanded on us by the law. To date there is no legal precedent for action against a University in a work placement health and safety incident.
- 2 This document has four sections:
  - a Legal responsibilities of all parties
  - b Procedures for placement approval
  - c Training requirements
  - d Student needs
- 3 These guidelines are supported by forms and templates.
- 4 The **Placement Health and Safety Checklist** should be sent to every placement employer, every year. Approval will normally be given if the employer answers 'yes' to every question; otherwise the University should investigate. Following checklist confirmation and appropriate health and safety briefings, the students should be given an **Authority to Start Placement**; they should not start work before receiving the document. If a student changes their place of work, or anything occurs that might affect the answers to the checklist, the information must be fed back to the University.
- 5 Each stage of this procedure must be backed up by written records, and will need to be kept for the full working life of the student concerned.
- 6 Review of the suitability of a workplace is a crucial element of placement procedures. Faculties and departments must make arrangements for a competent person to visit the workplace at appropriate intervals. How many visits and how often they are carried out will depend on the level of risk and the length of the placement. Only for a very short placement in a low-risk environment may a visit be omitted.
- 7 Feedback should include careful debriefing from students. Action on any point of concern should be swift and written records should be kept.
- 8 Faculties / departments will need to arrange appropriate training for their staff, and ensure that placement organisers are competent to discharge their duties. Visiting members of staff may need training, but they need not be health and safety experts.
- 9 Students need spoken or written guidance, or both, before they start work. They should also receive a copy of the **Guidance Notes for Students on Placements (Health and Safety)**. No guidance or briefing provided by the University can, or should, substitute for the employer's own health and safety briefing.

## Legal Responsibilities

### Bucks New University

- 10 The University has duties to both employees and non-employees, and must ensure that its undertakings (which include organising placements) are conducted in such a way, so as is reasonably practicable, that non-employees (including students) are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

## Employers

- 11 Employers must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. This includes assessing the risks to which employees are exposed at work and providing training, particularly for new employees. Students on placement are employees and as such are owed a duty of care.
- 12 The provision of relevant health and safety information and adequate instructions, training and supervision are particularly important aspects, given the youth and inexperience of the students on placements.
- 13 The primary responsibility for meeting the statutory health and safety requirements within a placement remains with the employer.

## Placement Organisers

- 14 Placement organisers must take reasonable care of themselves and of other people who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work. This means that individual placement organisers must be competent to carry out their tasks in accordance with statutory requirements and any other relevant guidance.

## Visiting Staff Members

- 15 Visiting staff members have a duty to observe health and safety practices in the student's workplace.
- 16 They have an additional duty to comment, to feedback information and to take immediate action, as appropriate.

## Students

- 17 Students on placement have the same health and safety responsibilities as any other employee in the workplace. They must take reasonable care of their own health and safety and of the safety of other people who may be affected by their actions.
- 18 Students must also co-operate with the employer in complying with the employer's legal duties.

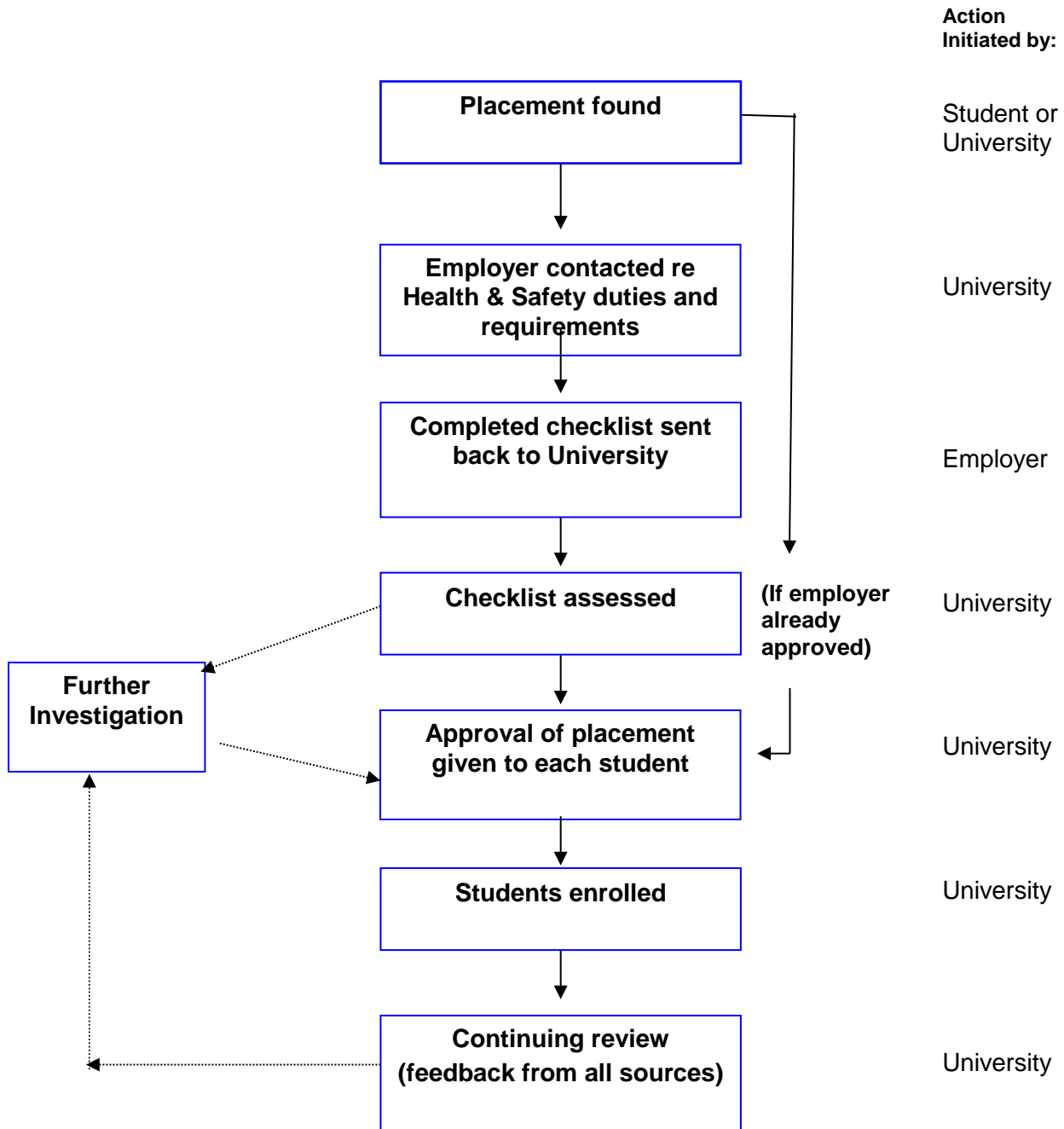
## Placement Approval

### Initial approval

- 19 The **Placement Health and Safety Checklist** is sent to each employer who has agreed to offer a placement. This would also be accompanied by a letter, an example of which has also been provided.
- 20 The checklist is designed so that a 'Yes' reply to every question would normally mean that the employer may then be approved. Any 'No' response would require further consideration, which may be by further dialogue, possibly with the involvement of the University safety manager or, if necessary, by specific assessment. Guidance on this matter has also been provided. See **Guidance for the Assessment of Placements (Health and Safety)**.
- 21 Although each individual placement must be approved and each student notified accordingly, one response from each employer should be sufficient to cover all students placed there.

- 22 Students must not start work until they have received formal authority to start their Placement' (see **Example letter** provided). This message must be in writing and be reinforced during the health and safety briefing. The students should also be told that attendance at the health and safety briefing is compulsory.
- 23 In their briefing, students should be told that where there is a significant change of location they must notify the placement organiser.
- 24 Once the placement has been approved the student may be enrolled. As work circumstances may change a satisfactory response from an employer should have a limited life and be reviewed as and when appropriate. As a matter of routine, the checklist should be sent out on an annual basis.

## Summary of Actions



The above flowchart represents the steps to be taken with each employer. Only one sequence is necessary, no matter how many students are employed, but the sequence will begin again after 12 months if the employer is to continue to be approved for the employment of one or more of our students.

A record of the procedure should be maintained (see **Example Record Sheet** provided)

## Review

- 25 There will be a continuing need for review. Visits to students at the place of work are essential and should be used as part of the review. It is therefore important that sufficient visits are made and that the visiting tutor/staff member is competent to observe health and safety practices in that particular discipline. The visiting tutor / staff member does not need to be a trained safety expert but should be a professional in the particular, or an associated, discipline.
- 26 A visiting tutor / staff member who does not meet these requirements may carry out the visit but would need to contact the University safety manager to receive comprehensive training in the assessment of all relevant health and safety matters.
- 27 It is not possible to lay down a standard frequency for such visits, as the following will need to be taken into consideration:
- The response to the checklist and to other preliminary enquiry's.
  - The level of risk (where there is a higher risk, for example because of the activities involved, visits will be needed more often).
  - The duration of the placement.
  - Feedback from all sources (the student, the employer, the visiting tutor, others). It will not be possible for the University to fulfill its obligations to review the placement if no visits at all are made, unless the placement is exceptionally short (i.e. a few weeks) and in a very low-risk environment.

## Feedback

- 28 Effective management of placement schemes requires feedback. Placement organisers should encourage employers and students to comment on the scheme and their role in it. The visiting tutor / staff member must provide feedback on health and safety practices to the placement organiser.
- 29 Where feedback indicates that a placement is no longer entirely satisfactory, the placement organiser should make every effort with all parties concerned to rectify the situation as soon as is reasonably practicable. In the event that feedback suggests the activity has a high potential to cause injury then the student should be removed immediately from contact with the hazard(s) concerned.
- 30 If the situation cannot be resolved then the University should, in writing, give the reasons for the withdrawal of approval of that placement to both student and employer. It may be necessary to reconsider approval for other placements that may be affected by that decision. Further guidance and advice can be obtained from the University Health and Safety Manager.

## University Training Considerations

### Placement Organisers

- 31 Placement organisers should be competent, aware of health and safety law and be able to identify basic health, safety and welfare defects. They should also know and understand the University's policy and arrangements for health and safety on placements and that they can get help or information from the safety manager. The placement organiser will authorise the enrolment of each student.



## Visiting Tutors

- 32 Visiting tutors must be able to make informed decisions on health and safety issues. They should be competent through experience and /or training to recognise an inadequate or inappropriate workplace and to take necessary action. Visiting staff members need not be health and safety 'experts'.

## Student Needs

- 33 Maximum benefits come from industrial placements when students are properly prepared beforehand, effectively supported during placement and thoroughly debriefed afterwards. Health and safety is an essential and integral part of this process.

## Preparation

- 34 We have a responsibility to ensure that our students are adequately briefed prior to going on placement. This should include written or spoken guidance, or both, as appropriate to the risks. Records should be kept of the briefing sessions and any documentation received by the students. However, any briefing given by the University should not be a substitute for induction or subsequent training carried out by an employer.
- 35 **Guidance Notes for Students on Placements (Health and Safety)** should be given to every student before the placement starts. Every student should also be given the **Student Induction Checklist** and instructed to complete it as soon as the placement begins.
- 36 Students should be informed which of the employer's staff is responsible for supervising them and ensuring their safety. They should also know whom to contact in the University if problems occur.

## Support

- 37 Students should be visited during their placements by a visiting tutor. Such visit(s) will reinforce the health and safety message. The visiting tutor should discuss health and safety in the workplace with the student. If the visiting tutor finds that conditions are unsatisfactory they must tell the employer and / or the placement organiser as appropriate, so that the situation can be rectified. In certain circumstances, it may be necessary for the visiting tutor to remove the student from immediate risk.

## Debriefing

- 38 Effective debriefing provides a further opportunity to reinforce students' knowledge about health and safety and to find out about possible health and safety problems in a placement. They can be asked about any dangers they found and what precautions were taken to control them.
- 39 The University should be alerted if there are signs that risks are not being controlled. The placement organiser should be told as soon as possible and relay the information to the employer.