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INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

This handbook aims to help Solent University staff understand and manage the placement experience for students.

We appreciate that this may sound formal in places, but it is intended to ensure that staff are fully aware of the legal, insurance, and health and safety requirements of a placement.

Solent Futures advises that placement tutors attend an induction session to learn about how the placement app works and to highlight key responsibilities – please contact us on placements@solent.ac.uk for further information. The Solent Futures team is always happy to help and provide advice if you have any queries or concerns.

We have also set up an [SOL resource](#) which we recommend that all placement tutors join as this is where Solent Futures will upload and update information about placements. It can be accessed by entering the password **support4placements**. This page includes resources for you as a tutor, information that you can use to support your students, and a discussion group where you can connect with other placement tutors at Solent.

UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS

A placement is an approved period of assessed learning in a workplace and must be approved by the University and appropriately supervised within the host organisation. The field of work should be relevant to the course of study to satisfy the requirements of the unit.

WHAT IS A PLACEMENT TUTOR'S ROLE?

The placement tutor is responsible for ensuring that the placement meets the course criteria and is appropriate for the student, that it has been correctly risk-assessed and that the student is fully prepared for their placement. As a placement tutor, you are signing off the placement on the University's behalf.

WORK PLACEMENT PROCESS

1. As part of your role as a placement tutor, you will be required to hold an introduction to placements for your students. Depending on how many students are signed up for a placement module and what course you oversee, this can take various formats – for example, this could be via presentations, online resources, emails or one- to-one sessions.
2. Your students should be clear about who their placement tutor is and the placement requirements – as outlined in the module descriptor – prior to starting their placement search.
3. Students are expected to source their own placements; however, placement tutors and Solent Futures are here to provide support to students. Solent Futures will also organise sessions such as '**How to find a work placement**' and '**How to use the placement app**'.
4. Course requirements for a placement should be outlined by the course team. We recommend providing the students with an up-to-date copy of the unit descriptor. All units that include year-long placements should have these.
5. Once your students have found their placement, they must add this to the placement app which can be found via the portal. Placements that are not signed off prior to students starting them may not be counted towards their degree. It is important that, as a placement tutor, you have the chance to check the placement before the student starts.

6. Once you have signed off the placement, an email will go to the student's placement manager, who must also agree to the placement and confirm this to Solent Futures before the placement starts. It is the student's responsibility to check that this has been completed prior to the start date.
7. Before your student goes on placement, you should make sure that they are also clear on the module requirements. This could include requiring evidence of work carried out or a time-sheet being signed – it is a good idea to remind your students of what is needed, because completing this after the placement can be difficult.

PREPARATION FOR WORK PLACEMENT

The world of work is different to university life, and students may not have worked in a professional employment setting or in an industry that is linked to their course. It is vital, therefore, that the students are offered preparation sessions to help them adjust to the working environment.

Courses which offer work placement units should, in addition, support students with the tools to find a work placement. Although the University does not find students work placements, we can offer support and advice to secure a placement. We recommend that all courses which offer work placement units should timetable sessions to help prepare their students for work placements.

These sessions could include:

- where and how to find work placements
- advice on CVs and applications, including the use of LinkedIn
- expectations for work placements, including a health and safety preparation, and a briefing about risk profiles.

In addition to timetabled placement sessions, students can access resources to support their search and preparation for placement.

Students can get support from Solent Futures via placements@solent.ac.uk

Online placement support is also available via [Solent Futures Online](#)

This includes placement handbooks and the placement tutorial.

THE PLACEMENT APP

The placement app on the portal is used to capture all the relevant information that the University requires in order for the placement/work-based learning to be approved by the University.

As part of its 'duty of care' for students, Solent University requires students to register their placement on the placement app. They input the details of their placement using the link on the portal. Students should only start their placement once it has a status of 'Approved'. If the placement is not showing as approved, the tutor should contact the student as soon as possible to get this resolved. Solent Futures can support in following up with companies who have not signed off the placement.

students will be asked to complete the following details:

Student details

- Student's details and a contact name in case of emergencies
- Student's course and tutor

Placement provider details

- Placement role title, organisation's name, address of where placement is taking place and business telephone number
- Supervisor's name and contact details

Risk profile

- A detailed risk profile for the work placement
- Placement role title, organisation's name, address and telephone number
- Supervisor's name and contact details

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

Written confirmation of the placement

This could be an email or letter with a company logo or email signature.

Task list or job description

This needs to outline the tasks – as an employee – on placement; without this, you – as a tutor – cannot assess if the role is suitable.

Employment contract

This outlines the student's rights with the placement provider and allows you, as the placement tutor, to confirm that they will be treated as an employee. It will also include the hours and weeks they are contracted for. All larger companies should be able to provide your students with this paperwork, while smaller companies or sole traders should provide enough information to allow you, as an academic, to assess the placement fully.

As a placement tutor you will need to see and approve all the details and documents. Tutors have the right to reject a placement on the grounds of lack of clear information. A rejected placement will need to be amended and resubmitted. If the placement remains rejected, this will not count towards the student's degree.

Remember, all placements should have approved status prior to the placement commencing. If you, the tutor, approve the placement but the student starts work before the employer has approved it, it is essential that the student gets in touch with placements@solent.ac.uk

We can provide the student with a document to forward to their employer to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities as an employer.

HEALTH AND SAFETY (H&S)

'DUTY OF CARE'

The placement tutor is responsible for ensuring that the placement is appropriate for the student. The placement provider undertakes responsibility for the student's safety while on placement. Nonetheless, the University has a 'duty of care' to its students when they are on work placement. It is vital, therefore, that students are prepared for their work placement and that a thorough risk assessment has been completed before they start.

Ultimately, it is the placement tutor's responsibility to ensure that the student is fully prepared for their placement. It is essential, therefore, that placement tutors deliver placement preparation sessions, which must include health and safety on placement.

These sessions should include information relating to:

- H&S considerations for students undertaking their placement abroad
- insurance requirements for placements in the UK and abroad
- how to complete the risk profile on the placement app, including examples of high, medium and low risks for each category. *See pages the risk profile section of this handbook for more information.*

OTHER UNIVERSITY SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

We hope your students enjoy their time on placement, and it is important that they know that the University is

here to support them along every step of their placement journey.

The following pages provide detailed information to enable you to help your students prepare for their placements. As a placement tutor, you will be their first point of contact to provide support. You can also guide students to more specific support provided by other departments within the University.

You can see a list of all the support on offer from student services [here](#).

Support available to students includes:

[Student Hub](#)

[Wellbeing and Counselling](#)

[Solent Futures](#)

[Find out here](#) what to do if your student needs help urgently.

Please make sure your students know how to contact you or your course team while on placement – there should always be someone within the course team whom students can contact. If you are going on leave, then students should be aware of the best contact to support them in your absence. You should also ensure that you have contact details for your student and are keeping in regular contact with them during their time on placement.

ACCESS SOLENT

Students who require specific support with personal factors (such as health, disability, language or culture) may require individual workplace adjustments or support, and should have equivalent opportunities in a choice of placements. You should work with placement providers to ensure that access and support requirements will be made available to the student while on placement.

The University encourages students to make disability disclosures when this may impact on study, and this also includes work placements. However, the impacts may be different in a work placement environment compared to the student's current experience on their course. Access Solent can provide advice and guidance about disability-related support at the University and on placement.

Access Solent can set up academic support for the following:

- Specific learning difficulties (for example, dyslexia, dyspraxia, AD(H)D)
- Mental health conditions (for example, anxiety, depression, eating disorders)
- Long-term or chronic medical conditions (for example, chronic pain, epilepsy, ME, HIV, diabetes)
- Physical or sensory impairments (for example, brain injury, partial sight, cerebral palsy)
- Autism spectrum conditions (for example, Asperger syndrome).

If you or your students require further information, please contact Access Solent access@solent.ac.uk

UNPAID PLACEMENT FUND

This grant is to support students who have been offered a short-term unpaid placement of between 10 and 20 working days. Placements must last a minimum of 10 working days (or 100 hours), and a maximum of 20 days if it lasts more than this, students may still apply, but only the maximum of 20 working days will be considered. This grant can only provide a contribution towards a student's cost's it cannot cover them 100% please be aware that if a student is undertaking a long-term unpaid placement, this will affect their ability to work, and the fund cannot be expected to cover their costs. Placements taking place outside of the UK will need to be justified and this will affect the level of funding a student may receive. Find more details on the portal or [via this link](#).

PLACEMENT OVERSEAS SIGN OFF COVID 19 UPDATE

Currently, we are not permitting placements overseas, unless the placement is taking place in the student's country of origin, where they are currently living. For example, if a student is from Portugal and they secure a placement in Portugal, then that would be permissible - however, we would not agree to a placement, where a student was travelling to Portugal from the UK or from another country. This is because there are concerns over health and travel insurance if the student were to contract Covid-19 whilst overseas.

INSURANCE

Employers' liability insurance indemnifies the policy holder (in this case the placement provider) by meeting their financial liabilities should their negligence cause injury to the employee (in this case the student on placement). Policy wordings, limits of liability and the requirement for statutory insurance cover vary from country to country.

Whilst on placement the student is considered to be an 'employee' of the company, irrespective of whether the work is paid or unpaid. If your student undertakes a placement outside of the University, then the placement provider (employer) is responsible for providing liability insurance – not the University.

LIABILITY INSURANCE IN THE UK

Employers and public liability

Within the UK it is compulsory to hold employers' liability (EL) insurance. There are some exemptions to this, and sole traders will often not hold EL insurance. However, many companies will still hold public liability (PL) insurance. Similarly to EL, this indemnifies them by meeting their financial liabilities should their negligence cause injury to members of the public, which would include a student on placement. For any placement rated medium to high risk, the University would anticipate that sole traders would hold PL cover.

It is essential that the student includes the details of liability insurance in the risk profile.

Please note that sole traders may not hold employers' liability insurance. Please be aware that the placement provider must provide public liability and employers' liability insurance. If you are not sure if this is the case from the information that the student has provided you with, contact the placement provider or student for further information.

LIABILITY INSURANCE ABROAD

If your student decides to undertake a work placement abroad, they will need to check whether their placement provider has appropriate liability insurance in place. This should provide them with protection while undertaking their work activities. Some countries do not require employers to have such insurance, or may have insurance schemes in place which are similar but do not provide the same level of liability cover.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL AND TRAVEL INSURANCE

The University's travel insurance provides emergency medical and travel insurance for students on placements of up to one year. Placements of over six months must be notified in advance to the insurance office:
insurance@solent.ac.uk

If the work placement is in excess of one year, the student will need to purchase their own independent cover. If the student does this, they must ensure that the insurance provider knows that they will be working, as some policies exclude any cover for this.

If the student is seeking to gain work experience that is not a formal part of their course, they will not be covered by the University's travel insurance and should arrange their own cover.

Before your students start to apply for work placements, it is important that you consider the potential location of their placement. You should consult the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the University's appropriate travel app prior to deciding on the location of their placement.

If the FCO and the insurance provider advise against travel, then the student must reconsider their placement location. Insurers will not normally permit travel in these circumstances as it is not possible to guarantee that the student can be evacuated in the event of an emergency.

The student's safety is our greatest concern. If the work placement is planned in a country where the FCO has raised concerns but not advised against travel, then the student must include this information in the risk profile section of the placement app. The in-country risks should be considered, and the placement must be approved by the placement tutor and/or the Dean of School or Head of Service.

If the University's insurers consider that the risk of travel is too high for the student's safety

to be guaranteed, then travel insurance may not be available. Under these circumstances, the placement will not be supported by the University. The safety and wellbeing of staff and students is the University's highest consideration, and staff and students will not knowingly be put in potential danger.

For the most up-to-date information, please refer to the University's travel insurance page:

www.staff.solent.ac.uk/business-toolkit/insurance/travel-insurance

Please raise any queries via insurance@solent.ac.uk

We recommend that if you have any students going abroad on placement, you direct them to contact placements@solent.ac.uk to ensure they have the details they need with regard to insurance.

While the student is on placement, they are considered to be an 'employee' of the company, irrespective of whether the work is paid or unpaid. If your student undertakes a placement which is not at the University, then the placement provider (employer) and is responsible for providing liability insurance – not the University.

RISK PROFILE

The placement app allows students to create a risk profile, which enables them to reflect on where they will be working and the risks of carrying out a placement. It is essential, therefore, that students complete the risk profile.

Students will need to assess the level of risk of their own placement at either low, medium or high, and provide a brief explanation why it has been assessed at the chosen level. At medium or high risk, students will additionally need to include actions to reduce the risk. It is important that this section is assessed fully. If you believe that the risk should be reviewed, do not approve the placement until this has been done.

As the placement tutor, it is your responsibility to review the student's placement duties and risk profile on the app. It is important that this section is scrutinised and only approved if you believe that the student has a full understanding of the risks of their placement, and that this has been assessed thoroughly before approval.

The app enables you to send a comment to the student and reject the placement. If you reject a placement, we strongly recommend that you discuss with the student individually why you have rejected the placement and support their completion of the risk profile. If, following an update to the risk profile, you still believe that the work placement is not suitable as regards the student's safety, you must reject the placement.

If you have any concerns about the health and safety of your student's placement, please contact the health and safety team, who will be able to advise you.

You can also find out more about risks on placement via ASET's good placement guides:

[Health and Safety for Placements.](#)

EXPLANATION OF RISK PROFILES

WORK AND/OR STUDY FACTORS

These relate to the placement provider and the work that the student will be carrying out. They include the nature of the work-based hazards to which the student may be exposed. Control measures may include thorough training, appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and/or the professional knowledge and expertise of the student.

High

- Potential risk that may cause permanent injury, including working at height, manual handling and/or working with/maintaining electrical systems, operating manufacturing plant or equipment such as weights, ropes or moving parts.
- Working with vulnerable groups of people or locations (for example, vulnerable adults, children).
- Activities that need specific licences or qualifications (for example, diving, security, REPS coaching, SIA).

- Work involving significant risks in small companies that do not have professional health and safety advice (for example, gym instructor, sailing instructor, fitness and personal trainer, coach).

Medium

- Working close to the above high-risk factors, but not directly with them (for example, events assistant, event coordinator, working at home, wedding planning assistant).

Low

- Office work or other low hazard (risk) environments and activities (for example, marketing assistant, web developer, retail systems consultant, assistant account manager, office-based events coordinator).

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION FACTORS

Driving and travel while carrying out the business of the placement provider can be a risk. Placements do not just involve the work carried out for the placement provider. Depending on the nature and location of the placement, the student may face significant health, safety and welfare issues associated with their travel to and from the placement, and to and from their accommodation.

High

- Significant travel to the building where the placement is based or travel on public transport facilities known to be high risk (for example, abroad or unknown).
- Placement requires students to drive other people in unfamiliar vehicles (for example, minibus of schoolchildren).

Medium

- Night travel or long daily commuting required (one hour or more).
- If students are driving for business-related purposes (that is, not commuting, but driving between business sites, for example), then they will need to have 'business use' on their personal motor insurance.

Low

- No significant travel, comfortable daily commute (less than an hour on known roads).
- No driving associated with placement.

LOCATION AND/OR REGIONAL FACTORS

The location of the placement can have considerable impact, particularly if it is abroad in a country that the student is not acquainted with and where the culture and customs are very different to the UK. This could also apply to international students enrolled at the University and going on placement in the UK.

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) travel pages provide security cautions and specific warnings which can help you determine the risk level of the placement location/region. The student should refer to the FCO before selecting the relevant risk level, and again before they depart for their placement.

High

- Significant risk of danger in the area – for example, placement in war zones, or any countries/regions where the FCO advises against travel. These examples are considered extreme. The University will not be able to support these placements and we strongly advise against travel.
- Locations where the student can expect that the majority of their work and communication will be in a language in which they are not fluent.
- Lone or remote working where local infrastructure is underdeveloped, so transport, medical and rescue services are not available quickly or locally.

Medium

- Placements abroad (including inside the EU) should be medium risk, unless the location is determined as high risk.
- Higher than normal risk of civil disorder, crime or comparable danger.
- Delays likely in communicating with tutors and others (for example, due to lack of communications/connections, mobile network coverage and WiFi).

- Locations which have different cultures and customs to the UK (for example, appropriate behaviour, dress codes, religion, and so on).

Low

- Placements in the UK with no significant local risks.

GENERAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FACTORS

The student may face significant health, safety and welfare issues associated with the environmental conditions in their place of work, including the general location, manual work, their accommodation, or their food and drink.

High

- Regional/local health risks that require specific health protection measures (for example, vaccinations).
- Very hot/cold or strenuous working conditions (for example, manual working, working outside or in the sun).

Medium

- Regional/local conditions require some action (for example, optional vaccinations).
- Occasional working outside.

Low

- No significant environmental health risks.

PERSONAL STUDENT FACTORS

Each student is an individual and so their health, knowledge, skills, experience and personality could have an impact on health and safety in particular environments, as well as their ability to benefit from a placement.

High

- The student has personal risk factors (for example, health, disability, linguistic or cultural) which may result in absence or illness/accidents, or episodes of illness during their placement, after adjustments have already been made to the workplace. This may include disability-related needs.
- The student's knowledge, skills and understanding are unsuitable for this type of work.

Medium

- The student has personal factors which may require specific adjustments or support during the placement (for example, disability, homesickness). This may include disability-related needs.

Low

- The student has no known long-term medical conditions or disability.
- The student has relevant knowledge, understanding and skills for this type of work.

INSURANCE LIMITATIONS

An assessment of the extent and limitations of the insurance arrangements of both the University and the placement provider, the contractual arrangements in place and the legal requirements in the country or countries where the placement will take place should be made by both you and the student prior to approving the placement.

It is useful to distinguish between issues that can be resolved by the University and issues that are specific to a particular placement.

The risk assessment for each placement must take into account the individual circumstances, and these will vary tremendously from placement to placement. There cannot be a definitive list of high-, medium- and low-risk factors, but the following provides indications of what will generally fall into each category.

High

- Locations, activities and/or circumstances that are excluded from the University's travel and other insurance cover. Please check with the insurance office: insurance@solent.ac.uk

- Locations where the placement provider does not hold employers' liability insurance or their country's equivalent.
- Placements where the placement provider's insurance does not cover the student for personal/third party liability associated with the work undertaken (please ask the placement provider to confirm).

Medium

- Locations, activities and/or circumstances that require prior acceptance by the University's insurers before being covered; please email insurance@solent.ac.uk

Low

- Locations and activities that are included in the University's insurance.
- UK locations (where the placement provider will normally hold employers' liability insurance cover).

STUDENTS ON A STUDENT VISA (formerly Tier 4)

Students on a Student/Tier 4 visa can take part in a work placement if it counts towards an assessed unit on their course and does not take up more than a third or a half of the course, depending on their level of study.

As the visa sponsor, Solent University is required to notify the Home Office if a student will be carrying out a work placement. Therefore, it is essential that students log their placements on the University placement app prior to starting the placement; failure to do so could result in a student breaking the work conditions attached to their visa. It is the student's responsibility to report their placement via the placement app, and as a placement tutor you should also be aware of who is going on placement and if they have completed the information required in the app. Placement tutors should remind students who have not completed the app process to do so prior to their placement starting.

As a visa sponsor, the University is required to monitor the attendance of visa students while they are undertaking a placement and will receive regular attendance reports from the placement provider. Unexplained absences could result in the University withdrawing its visa sponsorship and reporting this to the Home Office, who will curtail (cancel) the student's visa. Therefore, if they are unable to attend the placement for any reason, it is essential that they let their employer know as soon as possible and by 1pm on the day of absence at the very latest.

Student/Tier 4 visa students are not permitted to be self-employed or engaged in business activity, including setting up a business, being employed for a company in which they hold shares of 10 per cent or more, or holding a statutory role, such as a director.

Please note: if the work is not an integral and assessed part of the student's course, this would not be regarded by the Home Office as a work placement, but would instead be regarded as work experience, Tier 4 students are not permitted to miss scheduled classes to undertake work experience. Students undertaking work experience should ensure that they are doing so within the work conditions of their visa. The international support team in the Student Hub can advise students appropriately.

If you have any further questions about Tier 4 students and work placements, please contact the UKVI Compliance Manager, Andy Carre: andy.carre@solent.ac.uk

In line with immigration rule ST 26.2: 'Students are permitted to undertake work related to a work placement, assessed as an integral part of the course, that meets the requirements at ST 17.1. to ST 17.3.' Students undertaking a work placement are required to submit an online form detailing their placement. Solent University will assess the placement content and its duration to ensure that a work placement is an integral and assessed part of the student's course and in line with immigration rules ST17.1 to ST 17.3. Once Solent University has signed off the placement, employers will be sent an email with details of the placement and outlining employer responsibility.

For more information regarding employing students on work placements, please refer to the Home Office guidance: '[An Employer's Guide to Right to Work Checks](#)', page 39.

If you are speaking to a student who was granted a Student Route or Tier 4 visa for a course without a placement, they will need to apply and be granted the new Student Route visa before any placement starts. They may be in breach of their working conditions if they undertake work over the permitted term-time hours without Home

Office approval. For advice on visa extensions, contact the international support team:
internationalsupport@solent.ac.uk

CONCLUSION

The placement app process and the guidance in this handbook have been produced to support you as a placement tutor. The information has been created in line with guidance from Solent's health and safety team and using the support of the advisory bodies ASET and the Universities Safety and Health Association (USHA) – an organisation for the promotion of safety and health in higher education.

ASET was established to advance the prevalence, effectiveness and quality of work-based and placement learning in higher education by promoting and publishing research into that system of education. You can find their resources, including their good practice guide, [here](#).

