

Issue Date:	November 2017
Approved by:	Approved by the Executive on 29 November 2017.
Review Date:	November 2019



## POLICY STATEMENT No. 11g

**TITLE:**

**HIGHER EDUCATION WORK BASED LEARNING POLICY**

### INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW:

The College provides a number of opportunities for students to advance their studies through work placements and in some cases it is an essential part of the course on which they are enrolled. This policy is intended to establish sound principles which reflect the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code, specifically chapters *B3 – Learning and teaching*, *B4 – Enabling student development and achievement* and *B10 – Managing higher education provision with others*.

### Definitions

1. The wide range of settings in which students may be undertaking work, the varied nature of the activities in which students may engage in and the different relationships which may exist between the relevant parties need to be recognised at the outset. This variety creates some difficulties in providing a comprehensive definition of all types of arrangement which might fall within the terms of this policy:
  - **work-related learning** can be defined as '*students employed or volunteering in vocational areas using their work setting to contextualize their learning*'. This definition would typically relate to students undertaking a foundation degree which includes learning in the workplace.
  - **professional practice placement** learning can be defined as '*students gaining experience necessary to achieve qualifications and continued professional development*'. This would typically relate to initial teacher training programmes and higher apprenticeships.
  - **work experience** learning can be defined as '*students undertaking work experience to enhance their subject specific skills, knowledge and understanding, intellectual and transferable skills*'.
2. Work-related learning and placement learning, in the sense in which the terms are used here, both involve a partnership with an organisation which provides a setting. The main qualification aim is based on attendance at College or through the higher apprenticeships. In referring to these organisations, the term partner organisation refers to a place of employment or placement setting. The provider may be a business, school or other educational institution, charity, voluntary organisation, or public body. The list is not intended to be exhaustive.
3. For professional practice placements, learning takes place in a setting in which a full or part-time student of the College is placed for an agreed period of time. The placement will normally be credit-rated or contribute to a credit-rated element of the programme of study.
4. This does not include educational visits and fieldwork, where a student is likely to be working under the supervision of a course tutor. Neither does it cover flexible, distributed or blended learning, where a student is registered for a programme of study but does not attend the College or does so only for a limited period of time but typically receives course materials and support and guidance from tutors by post or telephone or through electronic media.

### **Responsibilities of partners**

5. Work-based learning and placement learning involves collaboration between the College and a partner organisation. It is very important that both parties should be clear about their respective contribution to the student's programme. This is especially the case in terms of higher level apprenticeships. Where placements are made it is vital that a named individual at the College is the contact for the partner.
6. The responsibilities of each party must be set out in a formal written agreement. The agreement should be signed by the relevant Director of Learning, or a member of the Directorate to whom this task has been formally delegated, and a suitably senior representative of the partner organisation. It would normally include a summary of the programme of study/apprenticeship that the student/apprenticeship will be undertaking and specify the associated responsibilities of the respective parties. The agreement must make clear if the partner organisation will be carrying out any teaching or assessment and, if so, how this will be supported and monitored by staff at the College. The agreement should state the action to be taken if there is a concern about the conduct, progress or suitability of the student/apprentice.
7. The agreement should also make clear where the responsibility for the health and safety of the student lies. It should be noted that the nature of the partner organisation may have a bearing on the applicable legislation (e.g. Moving and Handling) and whether the College or the partner organisation is identified as the 'responsible authority'. If in doubt on this matter, the appropriate coordinator should consult the College's Health and Safety Officer. In all cases, the appropriate coordinator must carry out an initial assessment of risk involved, and they should also consider the need to carry out an extended due diligence process and/or risk assessment before a student is placed in a setting.
8. The agreement should set out the circumstances under which it might be altered or terminated and, crucially, explain how the interests of the student would be safeguarded in such an eventuality. This could include a change in personal circumstances or in the circumstances of the setting. A suitable policy and procedure should be agreed during the process of programme development.
9. Depending upon the employment status of the student, the College may have a responsibility to ensure that the partner organisation has in place policies relating to equality and diversity, including harassment and discrimination, which are consonant with those of the College.
10. Where a student undertakes work experience a formal agreement will not be required. The programme leader must assure themselves that the appropriate insurances and health and safety procedures are in place. The signing by a suitably senior representative of the partner organisation of a statement to that effect will suffice.

### **Course Development and Design**

11. In designing a programme which includes work-based learning the team responsible for its development should give careful consideration to this element and its place in the overall design of the programme. The team should give particular thought to the respective contribution of work-based learning and the College based elements of the programme and to their interrelationship.

### **Assessment**

12. It should be clear from the programme document and programme specification whether the student is expected to demonstrate any required knowledge, understanding and skills through the performance of his or her normal work-based activities, through the performance of designated additional tasks in the context of the setting, or through evidence of reflection on the experience gained.
13. Where a student is formally assessed in a setting, the programme documentation must state clearly where responsibility for the conduct of assessment lies. If the partner organisation is involved in carrying out the assessment, the extent of the responsibilities must be clearly defined. The programme manager at the College must be satisfied that arrangements are in place to ensure that those conducting the assessment are equipped to do so and fully understand what is expected of them. The programme documentation must specify the arrangements for moderating

the outcomes of the assessment and demonstrate how consistency across different settings will be assured. The role of the external examiner in such cases must be clearly defined and the arrangements which are in place should be such as to allow him or her to reach an informed judgement on the standards and the quality of learning opportunities in these elements of the programme.

#### **Quality of the learning experience**

14. Although it is acknowledged that different partner organisations will not be able to offer an identical experience, the appropriate programme manager must take due diligence to ensure that all can offer appropriate opportunities which will enable students to meet the learning outcomes for the module and award.
15. In the case of work-related learning, the admissions process will include consideration of the setting in which the applicant is working or volunteering. A formal agreement will be established to cover roles, responsibilities and expectations. Where such arrangements are proposed as a condition of entry, they must be clearly communicated to the applicant in writing prior to admission. For work experience and professional practice placements, suitable training should be provided for mentors to enable them to discharge their responsibilities effectively.
16. If the partner organisation is responsible for delivering any part of the course, there must be a clear quality assurance and monitoring process. This will include measures to ensure that delivery meets the required standard and that required learning opportunities and relevant resources are in place. Training and induction will be provided as appropriate.

#### **Information to students**

17. Students must be provided with clear information and, as appropriate, advice or guidance before commencing a programme involving work-based learning and before any placement which they undertake as a formal part of their study. This should include the contribution which the work-based learning will make to their programme, how the experience will help them to meet the learning outcomes, and how these outcomes will be assessed. Students should be made aware of the responsibilities of the setting towards them with regard to the provision of a safe working environment and, where applicable, their rights in employment legislation. They should have clear guidance regarding the steps that they should take and who they should contact if difficulties arise or if they wish to make a complaint.
18. Programme Managers should ensure that students are briefed about the setting and made fully aware of the expectations regarding personal, professional and ethical conduct and standards required by professional bodies. Students should be given clear information and guidance with regard to any professional or legal responsibilities that they may have as an integral part of their work-based learning experience. These might include matters relating to safeguarding, confidentiality, intellectual property rights, copyright, and data protection issues. Specific matters will be looked at during the initial process whereby setting or placement related risk will be considered in the specific case of work-related learning.

#### **Monitoring and review**

19. The Programme Manager should take active steps to evaluate how work-based learning has contributed to the quality of the students' development and achievement. Students should be given the opportunity to reflect on their learning and provide feedback which is specific to their experience in the setting. The views of the partner organisation should also be sought, and there should be an explicit invitation for the partner organisation to comment on the support provided by the College. The information collected from these sources should inform systematic development and enhancement across the whole College.

#### **IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

This policy has been assessed and considered for impact upon people who share the following protected characteristics and factors: race, gender and gender identity, disability (including learning difficulty), religion and belief, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy, maternity and marital status.

**EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT SUMMARY:**

This policy has been impact assessed and has identified the following:

- Negative impacts (N)
- Appropriate actions/mitigations to address the negative impacts have been put in place (N/A)
- Positive impacts (Y)

For further detail of the impacts and associated actions, please see the EIA which is attached to the filed copy of this document.

**LINKED POLICIES:**

**MONITORING PROCEDURE:**

**DATE FOR REVIEW:**

November 2019

**RESPONSIBILITY:**

Directors of Learning

**ENDORSED BY EXECUTIVE:**

*J. Meenaghan*

**Principal**

**29 November 2017**

**Date**