



University of Essex



Work-based Learning Policy

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Work-based Learning Policy

1. Overview

- 1.1 Work-based learning (WBL) requires collaboration with organisations to create learning opportunities. The core aim of any WBL experience is to amalgamate student learning and knowledge with experience and workplace skills, to complement the educational offering.
- 1.2 The University operates a range of WBL activities, and is responsible for the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities on its courses, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them. WBL must be considered in conjunction with any professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) rules and regulations, the University's standard quality processes and procedures, and any applicable funding body requirements.
- 1.3 Processes for WBL development and arrangements are designed in accordance with the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) Quality Code for Higher Education, and are only intended to cover WBL that is an embedded, planned element of a module or course studied through the University.
- 1.4 Information and processes relating to the development and arrangements of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships can be found on the [Apprenticeships team webpage](#), or by contacting them directly at apprenticeships@essex.ac.uk.

2. Definition of work-based learning

- 2.1 The QAA define that 'work-based learning consists of authentic structured opportunities for learning which are achieved in a workplace setting or are designed to meet an identified workplace need.'¹
- 2.2 The University of Essex further define WBL as '*learning through placements, or 'live' projects for an organisation or client, that are part of the curriculum.*'
- 2.3 By contrast, Work Related Learning (WRL) activity may also exist within the curriculum, but is defined by the University of Essex as:

¹ <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/work-based-learning> (pg.6)

‘...activities where the content of the curriculum is applied or related to the world of work through realistic case studies, methods and problems, which are not ‘live’ projects set by an employer or client’.

- 2.4 The Work Based Learning and Placement Learning Association (ASET) present WBL as a continuum of activities and experiences that can be implemented within the curriculum.

Work-based Learning Continuum²

Activities	How integrated it is
Higher education apprenticeships	Most integrated
Work-integrated higher educated	Highly integrated
Work placement	Integrated
Assessed work experience	Less integrated
Live work-based projects	Least integrated

3. Course design, learning outcomes and assessment

3.1 Course design

- 3.1.1 Approval for WBL is sought via the standard approval processes for new modules and courses. Information on approval is available via the [Quality and Academic Development website](#).
- 3.1.2 The responsibility for ensuring that WBL provides adequate opportunities for the intended learning outcomes to be achieved and assessed rests with the responsible department.
- 3.1.3 The ways in which departments carry out their responsibilities will vary according to the nature of the WBL they offer.
- 3.1.4 Students’ learning experiences may be the same, or may vary, but all students on a course should have opportunities to achieve the same course learning outcomes.

² <https://www.asetonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/ASET-Good-Practice-Guide-Work-based-and-Placement-Learning.pdf> (pg.7)

- 3.1.5 Departments should consider the following areas when designing, monitoring and reviewing courses with WBL, and when determining the assessment strategy:
- the extent to which the WBL contributes to the overall learning outcomes of the course, and the extent to which learning is integrated.
 - how many credits the learning carries, the level of contribution to the degree classification, and whether any accreditation of prior learning and/or experience can be considered
 - the process for assessing whether a WBL opportunity is appropriate, the learning outcomes can be demonstrated, and sufficient support can be provided
 - how feasible the WBL arrangement may be including how sustainable the opportunity is, and where work placements are required discuss with the Work Based Learning (in-curricular) team whether these are available in practice
 - support and advice for students where circumstances change (either the student's or the placement provider's) and learning outcomes cannot be met in the same WBL setting, to explain any impact on studies and to help students organise an alternative opportunity or to return to studies
 - that when WBL is developed in the form of a Placement Year, the University has existing Rules of Assessment that are applicable, unless a variation is formally approved
 - budget for WBL travel costs. Where WBL is integral to a UG module, students are able to claim back the costs of any travel required to complete the WBL.
- 3.1.6 Departments should assess the health and safety requirements that the WBL may need ensured (see Section 7).
- 3.1.7 Departments should determine the intellectual property rights of students whilst undertaking WBL and ensure that students fully understand these and ownership of their work prior to undertaking the WBL.
- 3.1.8 Departments should consider whether any pre-requisites may be required as standard in the typical subject area for WBL, such as Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for example, that if not planned for or ensured prior to the WBL, could cause delays and missed opportunities for students in undertaking the WBL.

3.2 Learning outcomes

- 3.2.1 Learning outcomes can be specific, for example demonstrating higher level practical and intellectual skills required for employment, or could be more general, for example development of an understanding of the cultural or employment context of an academic discipline.

- 3.2.2 Learning outcomes can be tailored to the specific WBL module or to a specific WBL opportunity, where needed.
- 3.2.3 Where professional or practice-based standards and requirements are applicable to the course, these may need to be reflected in the learning outcomes.
- 3.2.4 In all instances, the learning outcomes should be shared with the student and can be shared with the WBL Provider, and the learning opportunities clearly identified to ensure the learning outcomes can be met.

3.3 Assessment

- 3.3.1 Assessment strategies should support student learning, reinforce the relevance of the WBL activity, and offer a range of opportunities to demonstrate achievement of academic standards. Opportunities for re-assessment and the impact of failure or non-completion should be clear.
- 3.3.2 Departments should consider the degree to which the WBL provider is involved in assessment, and how this will be managed to ensure the intended learning outcomes are accurately and fairly assessed. It is essential that all parties involved in formal assessment are qualified and competent to carry out their roles.
- 3.3.3 The extent of the WBL provider's role in assessment should be clear and conveyed to the student and WBL provider; Where the provider is expected to contribute towards the assessment of the student, the department should provide clear guidelines, marking criteria and training/support as appropriate.
- 3.3.4 Although evaluation of the student by the placement provider may not necessarily contribute to the student's formal assessment or their degree classification, it is useful in terms of the student's personal development and may be a required aspect of a student's professional development by some PSRBs (Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies)
- 3.3.5 The assessment of WBL should be subject to standard departmental moderation and external examining procedures and the University of Essex Rules of Assessment.

4. Responsibilities

- 4.1 The organisation and monitoring of WBL is the responsibility of the department supported by Student Development. When developing a new work-based learning activity, the department should consult with the Work Based Learning (in-curricular) Team within the Student Development Team at the design stage to ensure the offer is feasible to implement and that there is capacity for the Industry Engagement and Placements team to support the new activity. The Department is responsible for letting the Industry Engagement and Placements team know of any external organisations involved in their WBL provision and the Industry

Engagement and Placements team are there to support in sourcing suitable external organisations for the WBL provision.

- 4.2 Departments should ensure the responsibilities of all parties involved in the WBL activity (such as those listed in Annex A) are clearly defined and that each party is aware of, and fully understands, their responsibilities and the need to fulfil them. This should include any relevant preparation in advance of the WBL, during the placement, and any follow-up activities.
- 4.3 It should be ensured, by the appropriate teams, that all staff involved in WBL are appropriately qualified, resourced and competent to fulfil their roles and are given relevant training where necessary.
- 4.4 A written agreement should be obtained from the provider to confirm their commitment and ability to provide the student with the specified learning opportunities. In some instances, for example with placements, this should be formally received and recorded in the University's tripartite agreement (see Annex A).
- 4.5 There should be defined procedure to follow where the WBL provider is no longer able to offer a WBL opportunity, or the student no longer able to continue with a WBL opportunity. Such procedures should be clearly communicated to the WBL provider and students prior to the WBL commencing.
- 4.6 Departments are responsible for making students aware of the aims and role of the WBL on their course, the learning outcomes, the level of autonomy required, and the skills training which will enable the outcomes to be met.
- 4.7 Departments must ensure that all information relating to any pre-requisites (e.g. minimum grade or year marks), expectations (e.g. whether a placement will be found for students or if students will need to source a placement themselves) and potential associated expenses (e.g. cost of travel or relocation) is clearly communicated from the point of advertisement, as well as throughout the course and/or appropriate module, along with any funding opportunities that may be available to them.
- 4.8 Where the work-based learning is an integral part of the course, Departments must ensure that any travel expenses incurred as part of the work-based learning activity are reimbursed to the student, up to a certain amount. Please note: Although they contain integral WBL, paid Placement Years do not qualify for the travel expense reimbursement.
- 4.9 Departments are responsible for providing pre-departure information, (e.g. a WBL handbook), giving clear information about their responsibilities, rights and expectations, along with practical information, (e.g. travel, accommodation and cultural considerations), as appropriate, and to ensure the student understands their responsibilities, as noted in the tripartite agreement (Annex A). In the case of courses with a non-mandatory placement year and short placement components, it is recommended that this responsibility is delegated to the Student Development Team with prior agreement.

- 4.10 Departments are responsible for providing, depending on the nature and length of the WBL activity, a de-briefing/re-orientation, and information on how to participate in formal feedback mechanisms.
- 4.11 All WBL information, including learning outcomes, training, and details of support and resources available for students should be promoted and made readily available, such as through course advertisement, lectures and workshops, online resources and Student WBL Handbooks.

5. Work-based learning as a placement year

The University has agreed standard characteristics of courses which include WBL in the form of a Placement Year:

- 5.1 WBL modules, worth 120 credits for a placement year, or an appropriate number of credits for modular WBL placements or activities, will be created for each course. These modules will be subject to the University of Essex Rules of Assessment.
- 5.2 all credits are to be formally recognised, and students formally assessed.
- 5.3 the weighting towards degree classification will be 0% (i.e. stage 2/3/4 = 40%/0%/60%), in line with the current University of Essex Rules of Assessment.
- 5.4 students will apply for the four-year course, and course titles will include the words '(including placement year)'.
- 5.5 students enrolled on a three-year course that is available to undertake as a four-year course (including placement year) may transfer onto the four-year version, subject to the standard change of course processes and approval.

6. Embedding, monitoring and reviewing work-based learning

- 6.1 WBL learning is approved, monitored and reviewed through the normal University mechanisms.
- 6.2 Departments should ensure clear and effective processes for securing, approving, administering, monitoring and reviewing WBL, and should ensure any relevant PSRB requirements are met.
- 6.3 Departments should have a designated member of staff with responsibility for managing WBL and ensure that appropriate pastoral and academic support is available during the WBL.
- 6.4 Student should be provided with relevant points of contact related to the WBL, namely from the department and also WBL provider.

- 6.5 Where WBL exists in the form of a placement or on-going activity, departments should consider the feasibility of visits either in-person or via video conference to the WBL provider by a member of staff (Placement Academic Supervisor). Where individual visits are not practicable, the department should explore the possibility of liaising with other departments to share the time and costs involved.
- 6.6 Mechanisms should be in place to clarify how a student's progress will be monitored, how changes to the student's circumstances should be shared, and what methods will be used to evaluate the WBL after completion.
- 6.7 Departments should establish a means of obtaining feedback from students about the quality of their experience and a procedure for dealing with concerns and/or complaints and, if appropriate, terminating links with WBL providers. WBL in the form of a placement year, this feedback will be collected and collated by the Student Development Team.

6.8 Students with immigration sponsorship (previously Tier 4) compliance

- 6.8.1 The University has a responsibility to comply with the regulations set by the Home Office in relation to international students studying in the UK with a Student Visa. WBL must therefore not account for more than a certain percentage of a course as outlined in the Home Office [Student Sponsor Guidance Document 2: Sponsorship Duties](#) and [Student Route Caseworker Guidance](#).
- 6.8.2 Departments are expected to ensure that WBL is designed in line with these requirements and should contact the International Services Team in advance of setting up placement models to confirm that the placement meets the requirements of the Home Office. Rules and further guidance relating to Student visas can be found on the [Immigration webpage](#).

7. Health, safety and student well-being

- 7.1 The University has a duty of care for all its students when undertaking WBL activities, both in the UK and abroad, as part of their degrees.
- 7.2 The University must ensure, so far as it is reasonably practical, that students are placed in a safe working environment.
- 7.3 Departments designing and assessing potential new WBL opportunities should consider health and safety implications and determine which health and safety processes and procedures must be adhered to and are relevant for the WBL activity.
- 7.4 Information and guidance, including our duties under UK law, outlining the appropriate health and safety processes and procedures to support student WBL, including student placements, can be found on the [University's Health and Safety webpage](#).

- 7.5 Depending on the nature of the WBL activity, additional specialist health and safety measures may be applicable. Information and guidance for which can be found on the [specialist health and safety webpage](#).
- 7.6 Departments with queries about health and safety implications should consult the University's [Health and Safety Advisory Service](#), and/or the Insurance and Risk Manager (Finance Section) insurance@essex.ac.uk.
- 7.7 Departments should make all students aware of the University services available to support them should they require additional pastoral support whilst on placement, such as the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Team, and provide the appropriate contact details.
- 7.8 Students enrolled on courses where a practical professional placement is required have additional responsibilities placed upon them regarding not only their conduct but also their professional suitability as outlined in relevant regulatory and/or professional body codes of practice. Failure to meet these responsibilities can lead to the Breach of Professional Conduct, Fitness to Practice and Termination of Training Procedure being invoked. Students should be notified at the point of enrolment if their course of study is subject to the terms of this procedure.
- 7.9 In instances where a placement is believed to contravene relevant professional codes of practice, whether or not they are directly related to the educational process and whether they involve a colleague or an employer, the University has a [Work-based Learning Whistleblowing procedure \(.pdf\)](#) is in place to support this.
- 7.10 For WBL in the form of short placement or Placement Year, departments are required to liaise with the Student Development to ensure Health & Safety requirements are in place.

8. Resources and contacts

Resources	Contacts
Course and module design and approval: Quality and Academic Development	quad@essex.ac.uk
General information about work-based learning, work-related studies and placements: Industry Engagement and Placements Team	placements@essex.ac.uk
Student Visa and Visa compliance advice: International Services Team	international@essex.ac.uk

Resources	Contacts
Fitness to Practise procedures: <i>(applying only to students on some professional courses)</i> Student Progress Team	studentprogress@essex.ac.uk

QAA UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Work-Based Learning

ASET Good Practice Guide for Work based and Placement Learning in High Education (.pdf)

University of Essex Placement Staff Handbook *Contact the Placements Team to access the Placements Staff Handbook.*

Annex A: Sample Tripartite Agreement (Terms of Agreement)

Sample Tri-partite Agreement for University of Essex Placements (in curriculum) For placements embedded in the student's degree. (Please note there are a number of different tripartite agreements used depending on the placement type, this is a sample agreement)

This sample document sets out the arrangements for a placement between the Student, Placement Provider and the University of Essex. The placement is undertaken as an integral part of the student's degree. For the purposes of this document, Placement Provider' refers to the host organisation. The Placement Supervisor refers to the line manager based in the organisation to which the student will report. The Academic Supervisor refers to the named member of academic staff who will oversee the student's academic progress and assessment submission at the University of Essex.

For office use:

Information required	Details (<i>complete below</i>)
Student Name	
Registration number	
Degree	
Department	
Stage of study	
Student visa?	
Placement provider	
Placement provider address	
Placement supervisor	
Placement supervisor email	
Placement start date:	
Placement end date:	
Placement role title:	

Information required	Details (<i>complete below</i>)
Main duties of the post:	
Is Placement paid? If no, are any expenses covered?	

Terms of agreement:

The Placement Provider agrees to:

1. Provide a placement that gives the student the opportunity to engage in work that is of a junior professional level and enables the student to meet the learning outcomes of their degree course.
2. Provide the student with timely information on all arrangements relating to the placement including working hours, place of work, key named contacts, relevant working-practices, and identify a named Placement Supervisor.
3. Provide a comprehensive induction programme together with suitable support, guidance and training required to ensure the student is successful in completion of the placement.
4. Monitor student attendance, performance and behaviour in line with company policy and notify the University as soon as possible of any breach of discipline or other potential problem which may affect satisfactory completion of the placement. The student remains subject to the University's Regulations and Disciplinary Procedures whilst on placement.
5. Inform the Industry Engagement and Placements team of any unexplained or unnotified absence, or any other concerns for a student's welfare promptly by phone +44(0)1206 87 4220 or email placements@essex.ac.uk in line with our absence reporting and escalation process.
6. Engage with the University in assessing the student's progress on placement, and responding promptly to communication from the University of Essex, especially when more frequent checks are required for students on a Student Visa.
7. Inform the University immediately if the student finishes the placement earlier than expected.
8. Allow the student to use information generated during their placement to inform their academic work in relation to the placement.
9. Provide appropriate support to the student in line with country-specific legislation where the student has a disability or where one gets disclosed during the course of the placement.
10. The Employer acknowledges that a placement may need to be terminated if a student has failed to meet the progression requirements after the Summer and/or Autumn Exam Boards.

Health and Safety

11. Provide the student on placement with a full health and safety induction, including fire, emergency and first aid arrangements, arrangements for protection from significant risks associated with their work and procedures for reporting accidents, incidents, hazards and other health and safety concerns. Report accidents and incidents involving the student to the University. Comply with all necessary health & safety regulations applicable for the placement, in line with the regulations of the country the placement is based in.
12. Complete Employer Health & Safety documentation where this has been requested by the University.

Insurance

13. Ensure the correct insurance is in place for the student whilst on placement, or carrying out work at the instruction of the Placement Provider, complying with the relevant legislation of the country in which the placement is situated. Insurance is to be in place for the full duration of the placement at a level equal to, or better than, the cover notified to us at the beginning of the placement.
14. For all placements in the UK and overseas, provide information and a copy of appropriate insurances. In the UK, a copy of the Employer Liability Insurance and Public Liability Insurance will have to be provided.

Criminal Records checks

15. Carry out any required DBS checks prior to placement beginning, if the role requires it.

Information required:	Placement Supervisor details (complete below)
Name:	
Position:	
Telephone number:	
Email address:	

Signed (sign here):

Date (date here):

The Student agrees to:

1. Complete the placement pre-departure training requirements before starting placement.

2. Behave professionally and appropriately in all dealings with the Placement Provider, conducting themselves responsibly as a member of the University and the placement provider, and abiding by all relevant procedures and practices, including those relating to health and safety, absence management, equality and diversity etc.
3. Continue to be subject to the academic and disciplinary regulations of the University during the placement.
4. Provide the University with up-to-date contact details including their residential address whilst on placement, current mobile number and work email address.
5. Respond promptly to all communications from the Placement Provider and the University, including regular check ins from the Industry Engagement and Placements team, and continue to check their University email address on a regular basis.
6. Be aware of the Rules of Assessment for Placement Years and progression requirements in order to begin or continue on a placement. **Failure to meet the progression requirements may result in the placement being terminated following the Summer and/or Autumn Exam Board.**
7. Inform the employer and placements team immediately of any pending reassessment and outcomes following Summer and/or Autumn Exam Boards.
8. Complete all academic coursework, as detailed in their module outline / handbook and liaise with their Academic Supervisor within their department to check deadlines and requirements. **Failure to submit adequate coursework could result in withdrawal from University.**
9. Liaise closely with the University regarding any significant changes relating to the nature of the work undertaken and/or working arrangements.
10. Comply with the health and safety requirements of the Placement Provider and the University, and report any health and safety concerns and any accidents or incidents to the Placement Provider and the University.
11. In the event of a grievance or complaint regarding the placement, follow the organization's route and procedures for addressing the matter.
12. Be responsible for personal safety with regard to private activities outside of the placement.
13. Inform the University of any circumstances (including any medical conditions) which may affect their ability to complete the placement successfully and/or prevent them from fulfilling the requirements of the placement module.
14. Use information relating to the placement only to inform their academic assignments for the placement module, abiding by any confidentiality agreements set by the Placement Provider.

15. If taking a work placement overseas ensure they are aware of and comply with any visa restrictions of that country.
16. Inform the University immediately if they finish the placement earlier than expected.
17. If studying under a Student Visa, comply with the conditions of this visa including working restrictions and to familiarise yourselves with University vacation dates.
18. If the placement involves driving ensure their insurance covers 'business use'. The student (not the university) is responsible for ensuring their car insurance is appropriate for use.

Information required:	Student details (<i>complete below</i>)
Name:	
Telephone number:	
Essex email address:	
Home address:	
Address whilst on placement:	

Signed (sign here):

Date (date here):

The University of Essex agrees to:

1. Allocate an Academic Supervisor to the student. The Supervisor will have responsibility for overseeing the academic components of the work placement module, which includes ensuring that the learning outcomes are understood and fulfilled by the student.
2. Brief the student so that they understand how to use the placement experience to meet the academic requirements of the placement, including how they should monitor their own progress, how the University will monitor their progress and the importance of identifying and raising any issues with the University, particularly those that may prevent them from completing the placement.
3. Provide pre-departure information to the student about their responsibilities, rights and expectations.
4. Maintain contact with both the Student and the Placement Provider during the placement through regular check ins to ensure that both parties are satisfied and that the placement progresses satisfactorily.
5. Respond promptly to any communications by the Placement Provider or the student.
6. Provide full Student Support Services to the student, in line with what is offered to students studying at the University.
7. Inform the Employer as soon as possible if a student has failed to meet their progression requirements following the Summer and/or Autumn exam board and therefore needs to be withdrawn from a Placement.

Information required:	University details <i>(complete below)</i> :
Name:	
Position:	
Email:	

Signed (sign here):

Date (date here):

Document Control Panel

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