

IMPERIAL

Placement learning policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document outlines the University's policy towards placement learning at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. It includes Imperial's Placement Learning Policy Statement, an explanation of the responsibilities of the University, the rights and responsibilities of students and what is expected from placement providers.
- 1.2 The UK Quality Code for Higher Education considers placement learning to be "*a planned period of learning external to the institution, where the learning outcomes are an intended part of a programme of study*".
- 1.3 Imperial defines a placement at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, including PhD study leave, as follows:

Work experience, assessed project work, a period of course-based study or a period of research (*for which academic credit is awarded and/or where the student remains subject to the University's academic regulations during the relevant period*) **where there is a transfer of direct supervision of the student to a third party** (i.e. where a member of staff at the third party acts as the day-to-day supervisor/manager) **for a period of 2 weeks or more**.

The third party would normally be external to the University's estate, however, Imperial may itself serve as a "third party" by providing a placement. Placements may themselves incorporate a further "placement" elsewhere; in such cases it would be the responsibility of the original placement provider to act as the primary supervisor/manager of the further placement, unless such supervision is formally ceded back to Imperial.

- 1.4 This policy² **covers** placements undertaken at all levels of study which are a.) approved components of Imperial degree programmes or b.) approved for extra ECTS credit.

In line with the UK Quality Code, this policy **excludes** student activities for which academic credit is not awarded, such as purely extracurricular part-time, term-time and vacation work which students have arranged for themselves.

Nor does it cover field trips and site visits.

- 1.5 This policy is supported by a framework of Good Practice for External curriculum-based placements available at: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/placement-learning/>

Imperial provides support and guidance for all staff who are involved in the management of such placements. Questions and queries can be addressed to student.placement@imperial.ac.uk.

¹ The UK Quality Code (Chapter B10) does not define placement learning. Therefore, the definition provided in the QAA Code of Practice (Section 9: Work-based and Placement Learning, 2007) is quoted here.

² This policy includes clinical placements which form part of the undergraduate medicine course (except final year clinical electives), although it is noted that as an exception such placements are subject to School of Medicine protocols and not the university's Good Practice for external curriculum-based placements

2. Placement learning policy statement

Imperial is committed to:

1. providing placement learning opportunities of the highest quality which meet the aims and intended learning outcomes set, and provide added value within the whole learning experience;
2. providing well managed placements by making available to academic departments the administrative guidance and financial support that enables Imperial to meet its obligations and responsibilities as the placement organiser, including coherent staff development;
3. providing high quality student support and information for students planning, undertaking and returning from placements;
4. ensuring that, wherever possible, students with disabilities have access to placements;
5. placing students at placement providers who understand their role in providing an appropriate learning opportunity and who can meet all their obligations when hosting a student, especially regarding insurance and health and safety;
6. evolving manageable means of supporting, monitoring and evaluating placement learning opportunities;
7. extending the range of placement opportunities available to students. Departments are encouraged to develop placement learning opportunities.

Imperial has introduced a framework of [Good Practice for External curriculum-based placements](#) to help support and deliver on its commitments at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, including PhD study leave.

3. Responsibilities of Imperial College London

- 3.1 To promote placement opportunities at the pre-admissions stage by ensuring that all relevant paper and web-based literature clearly identifies placement opportunities.
- 3.2 To ensure that if access to a particular placement opportunity requires admission to a particular degree programme (especially where transfer to such a degree programme is not guaranteed after registration) that candidates are provided with clear guidance, for example in relevant paper and web-based literature, at open days, at interviews and in correspondence.
- 3.3 To ensure that for each placement learning opportunity the relevant learning outcomes and added value are identified and made clear in relevant programme descriptions.
- 3.4 To ensure that placements only take place in settings where the intended learning outcomes can be achieved.
- 3.5 That as a minimum requirement a risk-based assessment is undertaken by the responsible department for each placement or group of placements at the same Placement Provider. This enables Imperial to demonstrate that it has taken into account statutory requirements and shown duty of care in placing a student.

3.6 To ensure that only appropriately qualified students are able to progress to undertake the placement, and that each placement will be approved in writing by the student's department and communicated in writing to both the student and the Placement Provider.

3.7 To ensure that each student who participates in a placement receives appropriate guidance and support (before, during, and as appropriate, after the placement) from a designated departmental Placement Manager. Specifically, provision should be made for each student:

- to receive detailed information as to how study/work undertaken on placement will be supervised (including the scheduling of any visits by the Placement Manager and/or Placement Supervisor/Tutor) and assessed-marked, and how those assessments will be moderated (including for placements undertaken abroad in a university setting, the transfer of credit);
- to partake in relevant briefing and training before and during the placement, including general health and safety advice and being made aware of the University's emergency procedure.
- to engage with the Placement Manager to discuss features of the placement, feedback from the Placement Provider and to raise issues of concern.
- to receive continuing support from their academic department which should include, as far as is practicable, a visit or visits from a member of academic staff.
- to receive specialist advice and guidance if they have additional support needs.
- to provide formal feedback to the Placement Manager, and wherever possible discuss this with them.

3.8 To ensure that Imperial monitors the attendance of all students on a placement, with particular reference to those who Imperial has sponsored for a student visa.

3.9 To ensure that adequate provision is provided for the development of academic and administrative staff involved in placement learning.

3.10 To ensure that appropriate internal review mechanisms (at all levels and involving all parties) are in place to monitor and evaluate placement learning opportunities.

Imperial has introduced a framework of [Good Practice for External curriculum-based placements](#) to help support and deliver on its responsibilities.

4 Rights and responsibilities of a student of Imperial College London

4.1 Each student of Imperial who undertakes a placement should expect:

- to have access to appropriate and relevant information and support with which to plan, organise and execute their placement;
- to receive effective supervision;
- to be placed in a safe environment;
- to be treated in accordance with applicable legislation of the host country (statutory work-place legislation or statutory legislation applicable to a safe university learning environment);
- the results of the placement to be assessed within a timeframe laid down by the home academic department.

4.2 Imperial itself expects each participant:

- to abide by the requirements of their home academic department and continue to observe the University's regulations;

- to act with increased self-responsibility whilst preparing for and undertaking their placement, especially when they are being physically hosted by the Placement Provider; to be mindful of their role as a representative of Imperial College London;
- to attend advertised briefing sessions/meetings and to have accessed all information which has been brought to their attention;
- to inform the University of any personal factors (e.g. health, disability, linguistic or cultural) that may affect the level of risk associated with undertaking the placement or may require adjustment on the part of the Placement Provider; to inform the Placement Provider of any access or support needs that may require adjustments;
- to complete the [Student Placements Pre-departure Checklist and Emergency Contacts Form](#) prior to departure, to retain it throughout their placement and to be familiar with the procedure to be followed when confronted by an emergency; to alert relevant parties to “problems” as soon as is practical;
- to follow with due care all requirements made of them by the Placement Provider, especially with reference to health and safety;
- to maintain good and prompt communication with their home academic department by responding promptly to emails/letters, completing all reports and other requests for information etc and by maintaining regular contact with their home department and the host supervisor;
- to consult with their home academic department prior to seeking any changes in the terms and duration of the placement;
- to provide access to all records maintained during the placement to their host supervisor. Access should also be provided to the Imperial Placement Manager or Tutor except where there is an issue of commercial secrecy or national security;
- To report all accidents they are involved in using the appropriate university procedure, and to provide feedback on any health and safety concerns that are not addressed by their Placement Provider;
- To complete at least one piece of formal feedback.

5. What is expected of the Placement Provider

5.1 It is assumed that a Placement Provider will assess the suitability of any student who is nominated by Imperial College London or puts themselves forward for consideration.

5.2 A Placement Provider reserves the right to refuse to appoint or admit any student.

5.3 It is assumed that the Placement Provider is prepared to enter into any relevant correspondence related to the planning and undertaking of a placement by a student of Imperial, including completion of the [Placement Provider Information Form](#) where appropriate.

5.4 When agreeing to host a student of Imperial College London the Placement Provider will be confirming that:

- It can offer an appropriate study/work programme or project and will nominate a placement supervisor who will be responsible for making arrangements for day-to-day supervision of the student;
- It is able to contribute as requested by the student’s home department to the assessment of the work/study undertaken by the student and that it will indicate in advance of the placement commencing whether the agreed means of assessment might be affected by, for example, confidentiality issues;
- It has the means to enter into correspondence with an individual student in order to formalise the hosting arrangements and to consider questions the student may have in advance of arrival. In

the context of this interaction that it will also indicate to the student what, if any, financial support (or that given in kind) is available to the student, and how this is administered;

- It allows visit(s) by a designated member of staff from the student's home department;
- It has discussed a.) insurance arrangements and b.) health & safety arrangements with Imperial, with specific reference to the following:
 - It has provided contact details for a person with responsibility for health and safety;
 - It can provide health and safety guidance and training upon the student's arrival (preferably on the first day) and throughout the placement (e.g. fire precautions and emergency evacuation arrangements, instruction about any potential hazards and how to report accidents, incidents and unsafe conditions).
 - In cases of a.) serious accidents or incidents involving the student or b.) breaches of discipline by the student that it will advise and consult the home academic department.
 - Should it be made aware by the home academic department or the student of any personal factors which may impact on the placement that it will observe relevant national legislation (statutory legal requirements) when discussing any reasonable adjustment to the working environment and/or relevant hazards.

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