Staff: Your guide to Professional Placements
1. Introduction

Sussex Choice
Professional placements are a key element of the Sussex Choice initiative (http://www.sussex.ac.uk/study/ug/sussexchoice/). Many stakeholders are involved in the placements process and this guide for staff aims to clarify roles and responsibilities. The Careers and Employability Centre (CEC), academic and professional services staff in schools of study, and students work together to ensure a rewarding experience before, during and after a placement.

Professional placements are undertaken over the course of a full academic year, normally between the second and third year of study. The placement year is a 120-credit module. The module outline is valid for all courses and is available here (Link – owned by ADQE – unavailable as yet)

The Placement Preparation Process
A series of short information talks are offered by CEC to provide students with an outline of the requirements of a professional placement. Once a student has chosen to prepare for placement and informed CEC (https://careerhub.sussex.ac.uk/Form.aspx?id=243627) they will be given details of the Placement Preparation Programme. This comprehensive programme has been nationally recognised by the Association of Graduate Recruiters as a finalist in the ‘Best Preparation for Work’ initiative (2015).

Students should attend an introductory session at CEC, where they will be advised of the format of the preparation programme, estimated time commitment, and the University policies around placements. A department introductory talk, outlining academic requirements and support will then take place.

Following the talks, students will complete a programme of online learning via Study Direct, managed by CEC. At the end of this programme they will have the opportunity to submit their CV to CEC professional staff for review.

An appointment with a CEC Placement Officer and a group session with a CEC Careers Adviser give students the opportunity to review their progress and discuss next steps. These interventions take place in the autumn term of their second year and are timely as the majority of placement opportunities open for applications at this time.
Students can access the Placements Preparation Programme at any time, but CEC recommends that they attend an introductory session in their first year of study at Sussex.

Organisations who provide placements regularly visit campus to provide recruitment and skills presentations to students as part of the programme. There is also a comprehensive general CEC events programme, including Make it Happen and an annual Careers Fair, which is highly relevant to placement students.

The CEC placements team issue a weekly newsletter during term time, providing students with advice and guidance, notifying them of all the above key events and offering support at all stages of their placement journey.
2. Roles and responsibilities

Schools
- Subject-specific preparation advice
- Allocate Placement Tutors
- Monitor attendance during the placement year including compliance with Tier 4
- Visit the student during the placement year
- Provide feedback on learning logs and marking final assessment

The role of Placement Tutors
Placement Tutors supervise students who are on Placement.

The University Teaching and Learning Committee recommends one tutor per three or four students. Schools may wish to allocate a Senior Placements Academic Coordinator to manage a group of Placement Tutors.

Key duties of Placement Tutors are:
- Ensure the suitability of the placement to meet the learning outcomes of the placement module
- Provide regular feedback on learning logs submitted via Study Direct
- Provide pastoral care to students on placement
- To undertake at least one Placement visit. These can be in-person or via Skype if necessary. Guidance can be found here: https://careerhub.sussex.ac.uk/Form.aspx?id=650964
- Marking students’ final assignment
- Assisting students to reintegrate into studies

Action for schools: Nominate faculty members as Placement Tutors.

The role of School Professional Services staff
Inform SPA of students who are on placement so that they can be transferred on to the four year variant of their course ‘with Professional Placement Year’. School staff must also inform SPA if a student does not complete the full placement, even if they subsequently secure another role.

It is useful for CEC to have a central administrative point of contact with each department in order to pass on interesting vacancies to targeted groups of students, inform them of events etc.

Students
- Engage with the support available from CEC and their school of study
- Apply for and secure their own professional placement
- Ensure that CEC and their Placements Tutor are informed of their placement activity
• Submit the student-led monitoring form (MoU B) before their placement begins
• Submit leaning logs and complete final assessment
• Adhere to terms and conditions of their contract as an employee of the external organisation

CEC provides all the necessary documentation, advice and guidance to students. School staff may complement this with subject specific information to provide an enhanced service.

The Careers and Employability Centre
• Advertise and promote placement vacancies and events
• Provide the student with advice and guidance on the placement process
• Employer engagement throughout the Placement Process
• Prepare the student for placement
• Ensure that the monitoring paperwork is in place before the student begins placement
3. Documentation

The compliance and monitoring forms

CEC works with the student and their employer to complete the compliance and monitoring forms. These ensure that the University fulfils its duty of care to the student while on placement.

Completion of the compliance and monitoring forms ensures that:

- the University is satisfied that the placement work will be of a sufficient standard; that the student will be able to complete their assessment to demonstrate attaining the learning outcomes of the module
- the University has considered the student’s health and safety in the workplace, investigated any issues that may arise, and put in measures to mitigate risks
- the employer and student are aware of their rights and responsibilities in the workplace
- daily supervision of the student is transferred to the workplace supervisor (although overall supervision remains with the Placement Tutor)

There are two forms required – Memorandum of Understanding A (MoU A) and Memorandum of Understanding B (MoU B) defined in the Glossary.

Should the student, employer or University run into difficulties during the placement, these agreements are most often referred to by any party to clarify the terms of the placement.

Health and safety

Students on placement are still University of Sussex students, and the University duty of care remains in place. Whilst the student is also an employee of the host organisation, the placement year is a course of study. The Head of School (or delegated representative) maintains responsibility for the students’ health and safety while the student is studying off-campus.

The placements team within CEC will gather together all of the health and safety forms and information, and send them to the Head of School (or named representative) to approve the placement on health and safety grounds. The placements team will discuss and raise any potential issues at the earliest possible opportunity. These include, but are not limited to:

- working in a remote or unfamiliar location
- working in a politically unstable country
- working with children, animals
- lone working and lone travelling for work

UK placements necessarily abide by Health and Safety Regulation. Office-based placements within the UK are of low risk.
Placement Tutors should assess the workplace Health and Safety during their visit. This can be a general assessment based on visual judgement as CEC will have already asked for the relevant Health and Safety information before the placement began. Tutors can ask the student if they have any concerns over their safety and wellbeing.

**Action for schools:** Inform CEC of nominated Health and Safety representative with the authority to approve placement Health and Safety documentation.

**Attendance and visa monitoring**
Students on placement must have their attendance monitored by the School. This is particularly important with International Students on a Tier 4 Visa. The University needs to know that they are present at their workplace.

This is done through a combination of factors:

- The agreement forms signed by the University, student and employer include a clause whereby the employer must immediately inform the University of any absence without leave in the workplace.
- Students submitting, and receiving feedback on, their reflective learning logs.
- Placement Tutor visits

**Action for schools:** Ensure that you have a robust system in place for monitoring students on placement.
4. Procedures

Academic concerns regarding the student
The Placement tutor should be in regular contact with placement students. Common areas where concerns arise are:

The student has health and wellbeing issues
Students may need extra support or guidance from the Placement Tutor – they can also be referred to the Student Life Centre or Student Counselling service.

The employer has concerns over the student’s work or attendance
The Placement Tutor should seek to clarify the cause of this with the student.

In all cases, the Placement Tutor should inform CEC so that we can make a note on the student or employer record, as appropriate.

Early termination of placement
These scenarios are rare, and are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

The Placement tutor should work with the student to ascertain the reason behind this. It may be that with suitable intervention the student is able to continue on placement. By monitoring students’ reflective logs, any problems should be anticipated before they develop into serious issues. Please inform CEC’s Placements Team at the earliest opportunity.

If the student decides to leave the placement, they have the option to:

- Find suitable alternative work in order that they complete the minimum of 40 weeks, in order to complete their placement.
- Intermit their studies and return to University at a suitable juncture.

CEC can assist with liaising with the employer. If the employer is found to be at fault then CEC can raise a warning flag and advise future students that the organisation may be unsuitable.

Incomplete documentation
If the MoU forms are not filed with CEC before the student begins placement:

In this scenario, the CEC Placements team will inform the Placement Tutor and school office that the student’s monitoring forms are not in place. The school may then decide to:

- Advise the student to terminate their placement immediately
- Mark the student as absent and refuse to accredit their placement year – the student would then intermit
• Allow the student to continue on placement but the activity should be referred to the Head of School who may wish to consider placing it on the school’s risk register.
5. FAQs

From students

**What will my assessment be like?**
Assessment is set by the school of study. An outline is in the module descriptor available from ADQE [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/) If schools wish to adapt this, then they can do so via their Teaching and Learning Committee.

**What are the current fees for the placement year?**
Fees are set by the University and are subject to change. The latest fee structure is published here (link)

Current fees (2015/16):
- 20% of the full fee for home/EU students
- 15% of the full fee for international students

**What are my finance arrangements?**
The Student Life Centre can advise on current finance arrangements. Students should be eligible for their current finance arrangements whilst on placement, as they retain full student status.

**Can I do a placement abroad?**
Yes – the University welcomes students working internationally for their placement year. Students who wish to work outside the UK need to be proactive in their job search, and seek advice from CEC at the earliest opportunity. It is the student and employer’s responsibility to ensure that student is in possession of the correct working visa to cover their placement.

Students will also need to ensure that they have travel insurance that covers them for the duration of their trip. CEC will ask students to verify that they have insurance as part of the monitoring procedure, but cannot advise on particular policies.

**Can international students undertake a placement?**
Yes. International students can undertake a work placement, provided it is no more than 50% of their degree, which applies to all Sussex Choice placements. International students need to ensure that they have extended their Tier 4 visa appropriately (see below) and informed International Student Support of their placement year. They also need to ensure that they have the correct working visa if they are working inside or outside the EU. Please note that International Student Support are unable to advise on applying for working visas for outside the UK.

During the placement year, students will remain registered at Sussex and their Tier 4 visas will not be affected. Student Systems have to provide details of the work
placement to UKVI and this is essential so they can work full-time, otherwise they will be in breach of their immigration conditions. Please see the ‘Work Placements’ section of International Student Support’s website for more details:
http://www.sussex.ac.uk/internationalsupport/working/workplacements

How do I know if I have to extend my visa?
If the student applied to do a four year degree at the outset (to include a professional placement year), they will already have a visa which covers the full programme. Therefore only those who have converted their three year degree to a four year degree will need to apply for a visa extension. In any case, students cannot apply for an extension before undertaking the placement as they need to do so within 6 months of their current visa expiry date, at which point Student Systems would contact them to issue a new CAS. This is likely to be whilst students are doing the placement year or possibly after they have finished it as their visas will have +4 months. Students can apply for an extension any time up to visa expiry, which is likely to be in October.

From staff
How often should Placement Tutors visit students on placement?
Placement Tutors will be able to make an informed decision as to the frequency of visits required to fully support the student while on placement. A student who is having difficulty on placement may benefit from more frequent visits than a student who is having few issues. All students should receive at least one visit per placement - between one and three visits per year is normal practice.

The student and Placement Tutor should arrange the visit at a mutually convenient time.

How does the student transfer onto the placement year?
The school office should work with SPA to ensure that the course is available with the placement year variant, and that the student is promptly transferred once a placement is secured. This can affect the student’s finance arrangements so it is important that the student is transferred rapidly.

How much payment should students receive?
CEC recommends that all placements are paid the Higher National Minimum Wage (https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates) or above.

Many students would struggle to support themselves with no income for the necessary duration of a placement. Therefore we do not recommend that students undertake unpaid placements (even though they are within the bounds of employment law as an accredited element of study).
6. Glossary

Learning logs
Students submit regular reflective logs via Study Direct detailing their experience on placement and what they have learned. It allows them to chart their professional development through placement.

Placement Tutors should provide feedback on these reflective logs. They are often the first way that tutors pick up issues on placement. They also allow the Placement Tutor to provide advice and guidance on avenues to explore in the workplace.

Memorandum of Understanding A (MoU A)
This is an agreement between the University and the employer, setting out the terms of the arrangement. It is the responsibility of CEC to ensure it is completed before the student begins placement. MoU A covers multiple students, and is valid for one year from issue.

Memorandum of Understanding B (MoU B)
This is the tripartite agreement between the employer, student and University, detailing the individual student placement. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that it is completed and filed with CEC before the placement begins. It covers one student only and demonstrates that the student, employer and University agree on the job description, duties and responsibilities of the student in the workplace.

Useful links

Standards and Quality - resources
Please refer to the following guidelines

ASET (Professional body for work-based learning) www.asetonline.org

The University has an institutional membership. All staff can request to be put on the ASET mailing list for updates on professional practice. Please ask the CEC Placements Team on placements@sussex.ac.uk

QAA www.qaa.ac.uk

Please refer to section B10 for managing Higher Education Provision with Others


UCEA (Universities & Colleges Employers Association) www.ucea.ac.uk

UCEA health and safety guidance for the placement of HE students

http://www.ucea.ac.uk/en/publications/index.cfm/HSplace