

Workplace Education Activity Policy

Introduction

This Workplace Education Activity Policy recognises that the University of Lincoln seeks to help each student to flourish academically and personally through its programmes of study.

Part of the University's mission is to provide an environment for students where they are able to take an active part in communities of knowledge, practice and work that prepares them for their future lives. The University aims to create confident, knowledgeable graduates whose reputation makes them sought after by employers.

One way of ensuring that students' subject knowledge and understanding is well-grounded is to broaden their learning and life experiences beyond the University environment. An increasing number of the University's programmes contain such opportunities, by offering Workplace Education Activities within academic programmes either on a compulsory, optional or independent basis.

Workplace Education Activities can be either a formal part of an academic programme's structure, offering experiences and learning directly relevant to a student's programme of study, or they can be additional activity outside of the formal structure, designed to develop broader skills, knowledge and employability traits.

All programmes containing Workplace Education Activities are subject to University Regulations, and the details of the Workplace Education Activity offered would be included within programme and module specifications, which are approved at validation in accordance with processes detailed within the associated Quality Assurance Manuals. Manuals (*see specifically QAM 02c Workplace Education Activity*). This will include reference to optionality of modules, and how any academic credit will be awarded for the Workplace Education Activity element. A module specification should be completed for any Workplace Education Activity that is a formal part of a programme structure.

The University adheres to the OfS B Conditions of Ongoing Registration and has adopted the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) UK Quality Code and all programmes that include formal Workplace Education Activity are designed and managed to ensure that the expectations of the Quality Code are met. *This is without prejudice to any specific requirements that might exist in professional or practice-based areas of study.*

Definition

The University uses the term Workplace Education Activity to encompass a variety of activities associated with learning in, and in relation to, the workplace. The terms align with the UK Quality Code for Work- Based Learning which states:

Work-based learning: This involves learning through work, learning for work and/or learning at work. It consists of authentic structured opportunities for learning which are achieved in a workplace setting or are designed to meet an identified workplace need. This type of learning typically has a dual function of being designed to meet the learning needs of the employees, developing their knowledge, skills and professional behaviours,

and also meeting the workforce development needs of the organisation. Work-based learning is, therefore, learning which is distinguished from work-related or simulated learning activity that has not been formulated or commissioned by, or in partnership with, employers to address a current workforce need.

However, the University concept goes further to encompass broader work-orientated activities that may not necessarily be a formal part of the programme of study, but nonetheless help develop valuable skills, knowledge and employment orientated attributes.

Oversight of Workplace Education Activity

The University requires that for any programme of study containing a Workplace Education Activity, the approval of that programme will need to particularly consider this element to ensure appropriate standards are achieved and the maintenance of quality of the student experience is assured. In particular, where the Workplace Education Activity is a formal, credit rated part of the structure of the programme, validation will ensure that specific learning outcomes are clearly identified, are assessed appropriately, and contribute to the overall aims of the programme.

The University retains responsibility for the academic standards of its awards, programme teams should ensure that all industrial partners and employers who provide Workplace Education Activities are aware of their responsibilities in this regard, and that these are being fully discharged.

Industrial partners and employers are responsible for providing sufficient and appropriate learning opportunities for students engaged in Workplace Education Activity. Where the Workplace Education Activity is a formal part of the structure of the programme teams should ensure that these requirements are fully met.

Where the Workplace Education Activity is a formal part of the structure of the programme, programme teams should ensure that both students and employers are fully informed and supported during Workplace Education Activity. Programme teams should also ensure that both programme staff and employers are appropriately qualified to fulfil their roles in supporting students in their Workplace Education Activity.

College Academic Affairs Committees (CAAC) are responsible for Workplace Education Activity across College programmes.

Work-Based Learning

Work-Based Learning is a term that can apply to both formally identified modules within a programme, or to the over-arching ethos of that programme. The term Work-Based Learning applies where activities in the workplace form a natural learning environment and complement the pedagogical approach adopted as part of the learning and teaching strategy for the programme. The University adopts the following guidance, in line with QAA advice:

Work-based learning courses and opportunities are designed and developed in partnership with employers, students and other stakeholders (where appropriate) and contain learning outcomes that are relevant to work objectives.

The University requires that for any programme of study containing Work-Based Learning, the validation panel shall specifically address this aspect of the programme to ensure the maintenance of quality and standards, and the student experience overall. In particular, learning outcomes should be clearly identified, assessed appropriately, and contribute to the aims and objectives of the programme, within an appropriate work-based context.

As with other Workplace Education Activities, programme teams should ensure that all industrial partners and employers who provide Work-Based Learning opportunities are aware of their responsibilities in this regard, and that these are being fully discharged.

Illustrations of Work-Based Learning include, but are not restricted to:

- Students undertaking a Module Based Work Opportunity
- Students undertaking a Practice Placement
- Students undertaking a Professional Practice Year or Year in Industry
- Students undertaking a Foundation Degree
- Students in vocational areas, undertaking professional qualifications part-time, using their work context as a key component of their learning
- Students enrolled on a programme of study run jointly by the University and an industrial partner or organisation

Student Visa Holders

International students who require a Student visa to study in the UK must remain compliant with the conditions of that visa, and may not be eligible to undertake some Workplace Education Activity opportunities. Advice must be sought from the Student Visa Compliance Team in advance of Work Placement opportunities being arranged for Student Visa Holders.

Further details are set out in Appendix I.

Data Protection

Arrangements for Workplace Education Activity, and Work-Based Learning programmes involving a work placement or a programme of study run jointly by the University with an industrial partner or organisation, must include formal information sharing and/or data processing agreements in accordance with data protection legislation.

Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships
May 2023

Appendix I

Work Placement & Study Abroad (including Outgoing Exchange Students) Policy for Student Visa Holders

1. Definition and Scope

- 1.1 This policy sets out the University's requirements for ensuring that it remains compliant with all Student sponsor duties whilst students are on a work placement or undertaking a period of study abroad.
- 1.2 The work placement and study abroad period must be one of the following:
 - i. Credit-bearing. The module will be a credit point rated assessed module approved as part of a validated programme.
 - ii. A non-credit bearing, assessed module, formally approved as part of a validated programme. The successful completion of the work placement would result in an alternative programme title i.e. BSc (Hons) in Astronomy (Work Placement) or BSc (Hons) Astronomy (Industry Placement).
- 1.3 Work placements and study abroad may extend over an entire academic year, or a shorter period within the academic year.
- 1.4 This policy applies to placements and study abroad at Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught level only.
- 1.5 Voluntary placements, work experience or paid term-time/vacation work arranged by students and where the work does not contribute towards meeting programme learning outcomes fall outside the definition of work placement set by the Home Office and is not permitted as part of the programme.
- 1.6 Student Visa holders studying a part-time course (only eligible for RQF level 7 study and above) are not permitted by the Home Office to undertake work placements and have no working rights in the UK.

2 Home Office requirements

- 2.1 The Home Office's Student Sponsor Guidance state that the work placement undertaken by a Student Visa holder must be an integral and assessed part of their programme. The work placement can be based within or outside the UK and if the student meets the Home Office requirements, they are still permitted to retain their current Study visa for the duration of their work placement. This is provided that the student remains compliant to the Policy and the conditions of their visa.
- 2.2 If the work placement or study abroad does not form an integral or assessed part of the course, the student would not be able to retain their Student visa during the work placement or study abroad period and must do this outside the UK or during non-term time.
- 2.3 If the University of Lincoln is unable to uphold the sponsorship duties as outlined in the Home Office's Student Sponsor Guidance and in the Policy, sponsorship of the student's Student visa must cease during the work placement or study abroad period. In such cases, the University will be required to report the student's current Student visa for withdrawal of sponsorship to UK Visas and Immigration. The student will be required to leave the UK during the period of the work placement or study abroad and request a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) to apply for a new Student visa prior to resumption of study in the UK. Please refer to CAS Issuance Policy
- 2.4 Student Visa holders are not able to spend more than 50% of the total length of the course on a work placement unless there is a UK statutory requirement for the course to contain a specific period of work placement that exceeds this limit.

- 2.5 The Home Office only allows students studying a degree-level or above course to undertake a period of study abroad. The study abroad must be related to the course the student is studying at the University of Lincoln and the student must meet all the immigration requirements of the country in which they will study. If the student is returning to the UK to continue or complete their course, the University is permitted to continue sponsoring the Student visa for the period the student is outside the UK provided the Policy and sponsorship duties are maintained. Failure to comply with the sponsorship and reporting duties to the Home Office could lead to the student being refused re-entry into the UK.
- 2.6 If the student's visa no longer covers them for the whole duration of the course due to the work placement or study abroad period, the student is permitted by the Home Office to make a new Student visa application from within the UK to extend their leave (unless the University has withdrawn the sponsorship of the Student visa then a visa application outside the UK must be made). This can be done either before or after the work placement or study abroad period, provided that it is submitted before the current visa expires.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 The respective School that offers a work placement or a period of study abroad as part of the programme of study must ensure that they have an agreement in place that outlines the responsibilities of the student, the University and Placement Provider or Study Abroad Provider including a condition that the School will be informed of any non-approved absences.
- 3.2 The agreement should also clearly state that failure of the student to attend their work placement or study abroad institution could result in a report being sent to the Home Office and their visa sponsorship being withdrawn (cut short). The Placement Provider/Study Abroad Provider, the University and Student must sign this agreement before the student is permitted to embark upon their placement/Study abroad. Students should not be permitted to embark on work placement or study abroad where the agreement has not been signed and visa advice sought.
- 3.3 Schools must ensure that there are established means of communication between all parties during this period.
- 3.4 The School responsible for the work placement or study abroad must ensure that there is a formal process to monitor engagement and for the provider to inform the University of the Student's absence.
- 3.5 Where poor attendance is reported, investigation should be undertaken by the School to check wellbeing and to establish the reason for poor attendance. The placement or study abroad provider must notify their normal University contact when a student has missed 5 consecutive working days without authorisation/notification.
- 3.6 The School should attempt to make contact with the student using all contact details held by the University. If the student's absence remains unaccounted for after the tenth working day. The School would be required to report the absence to the Student Visa Compliance team. The Student Visa Compliance team will arrange to meet with the student and will then follow the necessary engagement interventions in line with the Student Participation Policy

4. Reporting Work Placement or Study Abroad location and duration

- 4.1 The School must ensure that information is provided to the Student Visa Compliance team with the full address and duration of any work placement or study abroad arranged for students with a Student visa by completing the change of circumstances form: [CoCRequests - New Item \(lincoln.ac.uk\)](#)
- 4.2

- 4.3 This notification must be submitted no less than 10 working days prior to a student starting the placement or study abroad.
- 4.4 The School must also notify the Student Visa Compliance team if the location or duration of a student's placement or study abroad change after the initial report has been made. Any notification of change must be made within 5 working days of confirmation.
- 4.5 Students must notify their School and the Student Visa Compliance team immediately if their work placement or study abroad location has changed after commencement or if they leave their placement earlier or later than outlined in their initial change of circumstances form. Any notification of change must be made within 5 working days of confirmation.
- 4.6 The Student Visa Compliance team must report the location and duration of any work placement undertaken by the Student Visa holders and any subsequent changes to the UK Visas and Immigration via the Sponsorship Management System within 10 working days of change confirmation.
- 4.7 In cases where a student holds a visa for a programme that includes a placement/study abroad period but is not successful in obtaining a placement a report must be made to UK Visas and Immigration. The relevant school must submit a course transfer within 10 working days of knowing the student will not undertake the placement. This course transfer will be assessed by the Student Visa Compliance team and relevant reporting action to UK Visas and Immigration taken. This may include shortening the student's visa in line with their new course length.

5. Alternative options for Student Visa Holders undertaking study abroad or work placement

- 5.1 If the University is not able to meet the Home Office sponsorship duties during the period of studying abroad, the student will be required to surrender their Student visa. The Student Visa Compliance Team will report the Student visa for withdrawal of sponsorship and this will be reported as a deferral to their course. When the student is due to resume study in the UK, the student would be able to request a CAS by completing the [CAS request form for continuing students](#) four months before resumption date, to apply for a new Student visa outside the UK.
- 5.2 If the University is not able to meet the Home Office's definition of a work placement or is unable to meet the requirements of the Policy, the period of work placement sponsorship of the Student visa must cease during this period. The alternative would be for the student to undertake the work placement in their home country. Upon completion of the work placement and prior to resuming study in the UK the student would be required to request a CAS by completing the [CAS request form for continuing students](#) four months before the resumption date, and apply for a new Student visa.

6. Student Visa Holders undertaking a period of work placement or study abroad (including Outgoing Exchange Students) case studies

The following case studies illustrate how the Student Visa holder is affected in a range of circumstances and the compliance duties required to uphold the University's Student Sponsor Licence. The case studies provide additional support to the Policy and are not intended to be a definitive list of circumstances.

Work Placement Case studies

Case Study 1 – An undergraduate Student visa holder would like to undertake a voluntary work placement (paid or unpaid) over the summer break in the UK or overseas. What are the sponsorship duties and how does this affect the student's Student visa?

- A. As this is a voluntary work placement and not an assessed or integral part of the course, the student would not be able to undertake the work placement during term time. However, an undergraduate Student Visa holder may be able to undertake full time employment during non- term time provided this is stated on the visa. There is no action required by the Student Visa Compliance team and the student will be able to retain their Student visa during this period.

Case Study 2 - A postgraduate taught Student Visa holder wishes to undertake a voluntary work placement to gain experience that will not be assessed or integral to their course. What are the sponsorship duties and how does this affect the student's visa?

- A. A Student Visa holder would not be able to undertake a work placement if it does not meet the conditions of the Home Office's definition. Provided it is stated on their visa, students can work full time during the vacation periods. For full-time postgraduate students, this is during Christmas and Easter only but not during the summer vacation period as they are required to study full-time to complete their thesis. Students can work full-time once they have completed their course of study and have time remaining on their visa.

Case Study 3 – A Student visa holder is required to undertake a work placement as an integral part of their course. The work placement will have an impact on the student's course end date and visa expiry end date. For example, a Student visa holder was originally due to complete in June 2023 and has a Student visa that expires on 30th October 2023 but the work placement will mean the student will not complete until the following academic year. What are the sponsorship duties and how does this affect the student's current visa?

- A. As the student will no longer be able to complete their course within the existing visa period, they will need to apply for a new Student visa four months before starting the work placement. Students can do this by completing a CAS request form for continuing students and, with assistance from the International Advice team, submit a new visa application. A copy of the new visa application submission must be provided to the Student Visa Compliance Team prior to starting the placement.

The School, placement provider and student would need to comply with the Work Placements & Study Abroad (including Outgoing Exchange Students) Policy for Student Visa holders during the period of the work placement.

Case Study 4 – A Student Visa holder is required to undertake a work placement as an integral part of their course and it takes place alongside taught modules. The student will still be able to complete their course by the original course end date. What are the sponsorship duties and how does this affect the student's current visa?

- A. The student will not need to apply for a new Student visa to undertake the work placement.

The School and student would need to comply with the Work Placements & Study Abroad (including Outgoing Exchange Students Policy for Student Visa Holders

Case Study 5 – A Student Visa holder is required to undertake a work placement that is an integral part of their course and would like to do this in their home country or in another country. What are the sponsorship duties and how does this affect the student's current visa?

- A. If the student will no longer be able to complete their course within the existing visa period they will need to apply for a new Student visa four months before starting the work placement. Students can do this by completing a [CAS request form for continuing students](#) and, with assistance from the International Advice team, submit a new visa application. A copy of this new visa application submission must be provided to the Student Visa Compliance Team prior to starting the placement.

It may be advisable to cancel the sponsorship of the existing student visa during the work placement and for the student to apply for a new Student visa prior to returning to the UK to resume study if the School and student are not able to comply with the Policy. If the Student visa sponsorship is cancelled during the period of work placement abroad, there are no Student Sponsorship responsibilities during this period.

Study Abroad Case Studies

Case Study 1 – A Student Visa holder is required to undertake a year or term abroad to complete a period of study at an ERASMUS or partner institution as part of their degree course. What are the sponsorship duties and how does this affect the student's visa?

- A. If the student can still complete the course within the existing leave granted by the Home Office, the student would not be required to apply for new leave prior to undertaking a period of study abroad.

The period of study abroad must meet the requirements stated in the Work Placements & Study Abroad (including Outgoing Exchange Students) Policy for Student Visa holders. If the student, School or Study Abroad Provider is unable to comply with the Policy, sponsorship of the Student visa must cease during this period (see Case Study 2).

If the student will not be able to complete the course within the existing leave granted on the visa and need to return to the UK to continue or complete their study, they will need to apply for a new Student visa four months prior to starting the period of study abroad. Students can do this by completing a [CAS request form for continuing students](#) and, with assistance from the International Advice team, submit a new visa application.

Case Study 2 – A Student Visa holder is required to undertake a period of study abroad. The institution that the student is going to does not have a set process for attendance monitoring for the University to maintain the sponsorship duties. What are the options to allow the student to undertake the study abroad?

- A. If the sponsorship duties and the Policy cannot be adhered to, the University must report and withdraw the Student visa sponsorship. By surrendering the Student visa during the period of study abroad means that there are no sponsorship duties to the Home Office to uphold and the Policy for Student visa students would not need to be adhered to.

The student would then need to request a CAS approximately four months prior to resumption of study in the UK and apply for a new Student visa which will cover the student until the course end date.