



# Practice placement & Placement arrangements

## What is a Practice Placement?

### Definition of placement

The University's placement modules require an element of work experience, professional practice or work-based experience with activities and/or learning academically assessed.

Placement learning is the learning that is a planned and intended part of an academic course, typically taking place outside the institution with the support of an approved placement provider.

A placement provider is defined as 'a third party to whom responsibility for the direct supervision of the student has been transferred' for the duration of the placement (UCEA/HEOPS, 2009, p.3)

### Placement principles

- University duties and responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 extend to professional practice placement. However, there is no duty to make a reasonable adjustment regarding the application of professional standards, therefore all students will complete the requisite number of days on placement (70 or 100).
- A student should not commence a placement without a current enhanced 'Barred Lists' DBS Disclosure.
- Students may be required to travel a distance of up to 50 miles from the University campus around and out of the county (including by use of public transport) to secure a placement.
- Students are not permitted to refuse a placement solely on the grounds of travel distance or cost as eligible students may be able to claim a Placement Travel Allowance from the NHS Business Services Authority (although this may be paid as part of the Basic Grant for a capped bursary).
- New opportunities continue to be sought within the 50 mile radius. There are no plans to secure overseas placements.
- Where a student chooses to reside permanently in addresses beyond this radius during term time they must expect and plan for placements within the criteria above.
- All social work placements are a partnership between the University, the placement provider, the Practice Educator and the student.
- Agencies providing placements must be approved, by the University, as being able to meet the requirements of the Health and Care Professions Council's Standards of Education and Training (2014) and the Quality Assurance Agency's Code of Practice Section 9 Work based and Placement Learning (2009).

- Whilst each placement will vary in relation to the range and quantity of learning opportunities they are able to provide, all placements will be able to provide quality learning opportunities directly relating to British Association of Social Work's Professional Capabilities Framework (2018) at the relevant level and Health and Care Profession's Council Standards of Proficiency (2017) and Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students (2016).
- All placements will be audited, both pre and post placement, using Skill for Care's Quality Assurance for Practice Learning to ensure that policies, including for the health and safety (to include travel, mileage etc.) of students are in place prior to any student going into the placement.

### **Funding for placements**

In recognition that providing a placement involves a considerable commitment from an agency the provision of financial support is available, paid through the NHS Business Services Authority and distributed through the University. The figure is £20 per day (or £1400 (first placement) and £2000 (final placement)). It is the responsibility of the Team Leader Placements and/or Placement Administrator to ensure that the funding is remitted to placements upon on completion.

### **Placement finding**

Placements for students are secured under Memorandums of Co-operation between the University and Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), Hoople Ltd working on behalf of Herefordshire County Council and Caring for Communities and People (CCP). A number of other agencies regularly provide placements for the University. Securing placements (at Level 6) is a devolved responsibility to the main partners who, together with the University Placement Co-ordinator, maintain oversight of the demand for, finding, matching and allocation process.

In the majority of cases, the 70 day first placement takes place within the voluntary, independent and private sector (VIP), although some statutory early intervention and care provider services within local authorities are utilized. The 100 day final placement will be allocated within an agency that has statutory powers, duties and tasks to fulfil, usually (although not always) within local authorities.

For the 70 day placement it is not essential that the agency employs qualified social workers, as this placement is designed to broaden the experience of students in a wide range of social care services, developing their abilities to form relationships, improve communication skills and commence informal assessments and care planning. The person responsible for supporting the student on a day-to-day basis (Placement Supervisor) does not have to be a qualified social worker although they must attend training and support sessions provided by the University.

However, the assessment of a student must be completed by a qualified, experienced, registered social worker who has attained or is completing Stage 1 of the Practice

Educator Professional Standards. If an off-site Practice Educator is to be secured then that Practice Educator must be Stage 2 trained (see below).

In the final/qualifying year placement the student must have a Practice Educator who is a qualified, registered and experienced social worker who has attained or is completing Stage 2 of the Practice Educator Professional Standards.

### **Placement approval process**

Initial approval of new placement providers will require a visit from one of the partner Practice Learning Co-ordinators (or other title) or University Placement Co-ordinator who will work with the provider to undertake a pre-placement audit to ensure the suitability of the potential provider. The Quality Assurance for Practice Learning pre-placement audit form will be completed and returned to the University Placement Co-ordinator and Placement Administrator team.

The University Placement Co-ordinator will determine whether the information provided meets with the requirements. Where this is considered to be the case, interim approval will be granted and a placement may be used for the immediate future. The Course Leader and relevant Module Tutor will be informed of the decision. Where the information does not meet requirements, the University Placement Co-ordinator will arrange a visit to secure further information before approving the placement for immediate use.

The second and annual approval process involves securing evidence from a range of sources:

- Outcomes from training team meetings where there have been difficulties in placement, either related to the student or to the placement
- Analysis of the Quality Assurance for Practice Learning reports (see below)
- Practice Assessment Panel reports on student's development from the placement portfolio.

Quality Assurance for Practice Learning reports are submitted by all involved in the placement, the student, the Placement Supervisor, the Practice Educator and the Link Tutor. In addition, the Link Tutor and, for a set number, a second reader provide a report on the student's learning experience to the Practice Assessment Panel. This includes a recommendation on whether the placement is suitable.

The University Placement Co-ordinator will triangulate and evaluate all reports and provide a recommendation at the next Programme Management Meeting for approval by them of on-going use of the placement provider. Decisions will be clearly recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Where the decision is made not to continue use of the provider, the Academic Subject Lead will communicate the decision and the reasons for this in writing to the placement provider, copying in the Course Leader and the relevant agency Practice Learning Co-ordinator. The placement will be given the opportunity to address the areas of concern in line with an agreed action plan in order that it can be considered on future occasions. Evidence of meeting the action plan will be secured through a visit by the University Placement Co-ordinator.

### **Practice Educator and Placement Supervisor training**

From September 2015, all Practice Educators must be qualified, experienced, registered social workers who have undertaken specific training. Skills for Care, commissioned by the Department of Health and the Department for Education following recommendations by the Social Work Reform Board, developed the Practice Educator Professional Standards and this is now hosted by British Association of Social Workers. These govern the standards for all those who support, supervise, teach and assess social work students on placement. The training comes in two stages:

#### **Stage 1**

Practice educators at Stage 1 will have sufficient experience (minimum of 2 years) and have demonstrated competence to directly supervise, teach and assess social work degree students up to but not including the final assessment prior to qualification. Stage 1 practice educators can contribute to a final placement but not take full responsibility for the assessment.

#### **Stage 2**

Stage 2 practice educators will have sufficient experience (minimum of 3 years) and have demonstrated competence to supervise, teach and assess social work students up to and including the final placement.

The University currently provide Practice Education training for Stages 1 and 2. All practice educators in training should be supported by a Stage 2 practice educator/mentor supplied by their employers. With these arrangements in place a practice educator can take responsibility for a student social worker in a placement.

Placement supervisors can be non-social work qualified and this is frequently the case when placements are provided in the voluntary and or independent sectors. In pursuit of the ambition for high quality placements, the University will, from September 2015, only approve new placements where it is intended that placement supervisors will also complete or have completed equivalent Stage 1 training.

### **Approval of Practice Educators and Placement Supervisors**

#### **Initial approval**

Potential new non-social work qualified placement supervisors will be given initial approval subject to the following:

- They have a minimum of three years' experience in their current field of expertise and can provide evidence of maintenance of a commitment to continuous professional development.
- They have completed or are registered for an equivalent training at stage 1.
- The University Placement Co-ordinator will determine equivalence based on the provision of evidence.

Potential new employed social work qualified placement supervisors and practice educators will be given initial approval subject to the following:

- They have a minimum of two years post qualifying experience.
- They are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.
- They are employed by an agency that is sponsoring their training.
- They are about to or are currently hosting a placement for a social work student.
- They are registered for the stage 1 and/or 2 of the Practice Educator programme or have a qualification of equivalent standard as detailed in the PEPS.

Potential new self-employed social work qualified Practice Educators will be given initial approval subject to the following:

- They have a minimum of two years post qualifying experience.
- They are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council
- They can provide evidence of having worked with social works students previously.
- They can provide two satisfactory references.
- They are committed to working with a current social work student.
- They have a qualification of equivalent standard as detailed in the PEPS.
- They can provide evidence of having suitable Professional Indemnity Insurance.

Quality Assurance for Practice Learning reports are submitted by all involved in the placement, the student, the Placement Supervisor, the Practice Educator and the Link Tutor. In addition, the Link Tutor and, for a set number, a second reader provide a report on the student's learning experience to the Practice Assessment Panel. This includes feedback to the Practice Educator with a particular focus on the quality of the learning provided and their feedback to students in direct observations and final report.

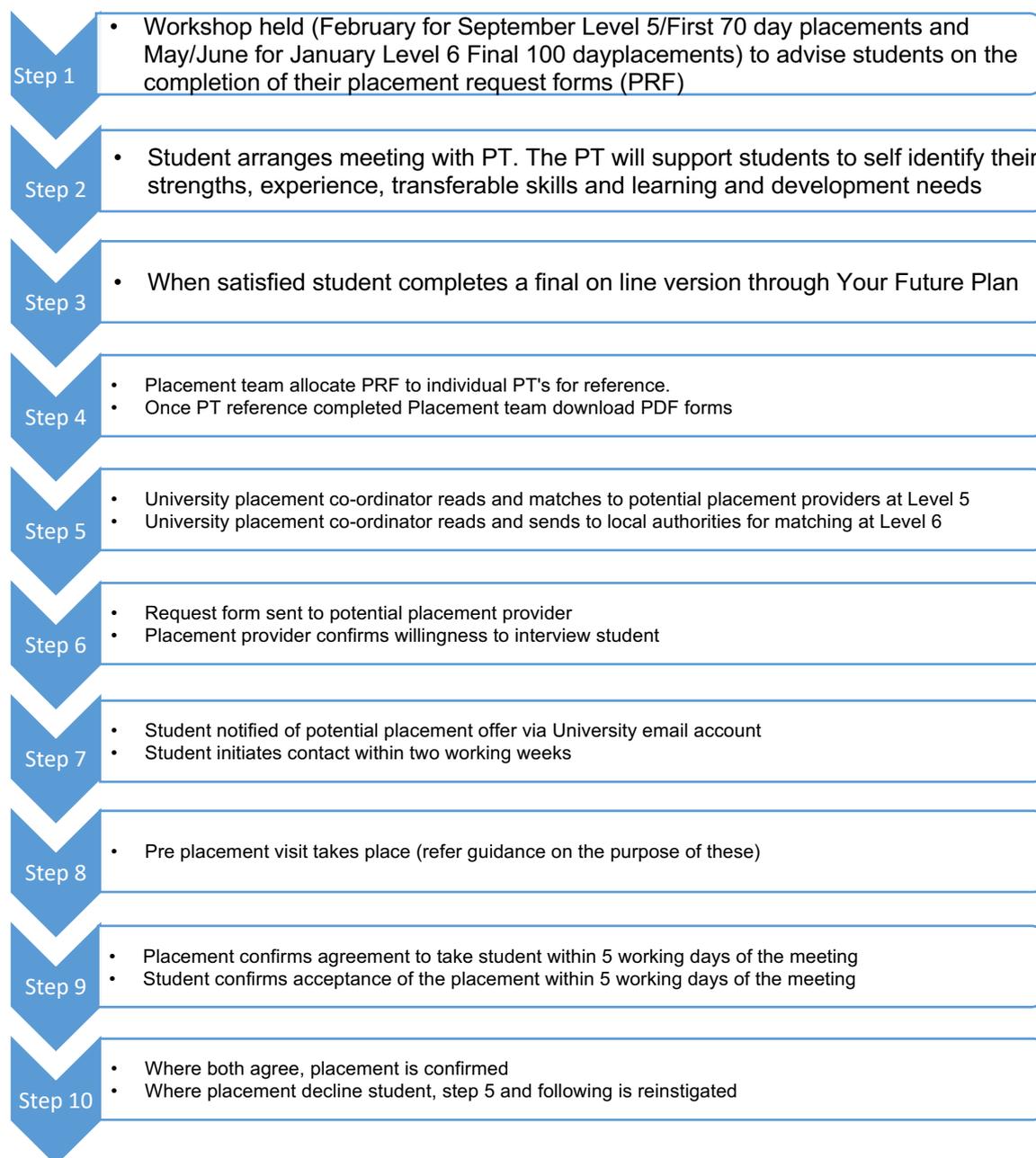
The University Placement Co-ordinator will triangulate and evaluate all feedback and reports and provide a recommendation at the next Programme Management Meeting for approval by them of on-going use of Practice Educator. Decisions will be clearly recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Where the decision is made not to continue use, the Academic Subject Lead will meet with the Practice Educator to provide feedback and communicate the decision, following this up in writing. The Practice Educator and the reasons for this in writing to

the Practice Educator, copying in the Course Leader and the relevant agency Practice Learning Co-ordinator.

## Placement Requests and Matching Process

The flowchart below summarises the steps within the placement process.



Students are advised that refusal of a placement that has been approved as meeting the requirements in providing relevant learning opportunities for them to meet the Professional Capabilities Framework are not permitted. Where there are exceptional reasons for a refusal of a placement this may result in a delay to the start date.

Students should note that:

- All modules must be successfully completed at Level 4 before they can progress on to Level 5 first placement; placement arrangements can therefore be discontinued at short notice
- Placements cannot be 'exchanged' as a matter of choice once confirmed
- Placement arrangements may cease at extremely short notice if unforeseen difficulties arise for the placement provider; this will result in a new placement but may involve a delay whilst a new provider is secured.

### **Preplacement Visit**

This meeting should normally take place within two weeks of the student receiving notification of the placement on offer. It should take place in the agency setting before the placement is formally agreed. The nature and content of the meeting may vary depending on the Practice Educator/on-site supervisor: in some cases it may be very informal and in other more formal and not unlike an interview.

The meeting has several functions:

- It is an opportunity for the student to ask any questions s/he may have about the placement setting and work opportunities.
- It is an opportunity for the Practice Educator/on-site supervisor to find out what particular interests, aspirations, needs and concerns the student may have.
- It is an opportunity for the student and the Practice Educator/on-site supervisor to identify areas where clarity is needed or for further discussion at the Learning Agreement Meeting.
- It is an opportunity for the student and the Practice Educator/on-site supervisor to identify learning opportunities that will enable the student to demonstrate capability.
- It is an opportunity to clarify the transport issues under Section 12 Keeping Safe on Placement (p12/13).
- It is an opportunity for the Practice Educator/on-site supervisor to confirm that the placement will go ahead.
- It is essential that the student makes a good first impression in order to maximise their chances of confirming the placement offer. The student should prepare for the meeting as if it were an interview. Students are encouraged to research information about the agency on the internet and be up-to-date on current issues relating to the service user group(s) or communities the placement organisation works with. They should prepare any questions that they would like answered beforehand.

At the end of the meeting it should be agreed whether the placement will go ahead. Both the placement provider and the student should confirm their agreement to the Placement Administration team and University Placement Learning Co-ordinator. It is important that the latter is informed so that they can monitor and inform the course management team of the progress of placements and, where necessary, arrange for

or provide information on the appointment of an off-site Practice Educator. The following information should be provided by the placement provider:

- The name of the placement agency
- The address where the placement will be based
- The name, phone number and email address of the person who will be the Practice Educator or where there will be an off-site Practice Educator, the name, phone number and email address of the person who will be the on-site supervisor

### Preparation for placements

Placement preparation and recall days are delivered immediately prior to and alongside students placement modules by the Module Tutor, who will ensure that the student is fully prepared for the placement and expectations have been fully explained. A minimum half day workshop will be held for all Placement Supervisors and Practice Educators in addition to any training that they might require.

### Timelines and support during placements

The practice placement takes place within a 'Learning System' (Field, Jasper and Littler, 2014, p.122) where the training team is a developmental, educative partnership within larger systems incorporating the placement agency and the University. Both will have processes, policies and procedures that need to be met and adhered to. This requires significant organisation and management on the part of all involved.

Month	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
<b>Level 5 First placement</b>	70 days →											
<b>Level 6 Last/ Completion Placement</b>	100 days →											

The key dates of the placement together with a Gant Chart evidencing how a placement should be managed are available on the relevant Moodle Site and external practice support web page.

### Placement meetings

There will be a minimum of three meetings during the course of each placement at a time convenient to all members. The student, Practice Educator, Placement Supervisor (if this is a separate role) and Link Tutor will attend. The meetings generally take place within the placement setting but, in exceptional circumstances, may be held at the University. Other than in exceptional circumstances, the meeting should take place within the timescales outlined in the key dates. Guidance on these is available on the practice support web page.