



Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education

Section 9: Work-based and placement learning

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Foreword

- 1 This document is the second edition of a code of practice for work-based and placement learning in programmes awarded by UK higher education institutions. It is one of a suite of inter-related documents, which forms an overall *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*) for the guidance of higher education institutions subscribing to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).
- 2 The overall *Code of practice* and its ten constituent sections were originally prepared by QAA between 1998 and 2001 in response to the reports of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education and its Scottish Committee (the *Dearing and Garrick Reports*). The *Code of practice* supports the national arrangements within the UK for quality assurance in higher education. It identifies a comprehensive series of system-wide principles (precepts) covering matters relating to the management of academic quality and standards in higher education. It provides an authoritative reference point for institutions as they consciously, actively and systematically assure the academic quality and standards of their programmes, awards and qualifications.
- 3 The *Code of practice* assumes that, taking into account principles and practices agreed UK-wide, each institution has its own systems for independent verification both of its quality and standards and of the effectiveness of its quality assurance systems. In developing the *Code of practice*, extensive advice has been sought from a range of knowledgeable practitioners.
- 4 The *Code of practice* does not incorporate statutory requirements relating to relevant legislation, for example the *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001*. It assumes that institutions have an overriding obligation in all such cases to ensure that they meet the requirements of legislation. However, where a section of the *Code of practice* is related to legislative or similar obligations, efforts have been made to ensure compatibility with them.
- 5 Since 2001, a number of developments in UK higher education have encouraged QAA to begin a revision of individual sections of the *Code of practice*. In undertaking this task, QAA has also decided to review the structure of the sections and, in particular, to replace the original 'precepts and guidance' format with a 'precepts and explanation' approach, using the explanations to make clear why the precepts are considered important and reducing opportunities for a 'checklist' approach to the *Code of practice*. In doing so, QAA has sought to meet Recommendation 4 (part 4) of the Better Regulation Task Force in its report *Higher Education: Easing the Burden*, July 2002. This revised section has also taken account of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*.
- 6 Revised sections of the *Code of practice* are therefore now structured into a series of precepts and accompanying explanations. The precepts express key matters of principle that the higher education community has identified as important for the assurance of quality and academic standards. Individual institutions should be able to demonstrate they are addressing the matters tackled by the precepts effectively, through their own management and organisational processes, taking account of institutional needs, traditions, culture and decision-making. The accompanying explanations show why the precepts are important.

- 7 The *Code of practice* is a statement of good practice that has been endorsed by the higher education community. As such, it is useful in QAA's audit and review processes that consider the extent to which an institution, in developing and implementing its own policies, has taken account of the *Code of practice* and its precepts.
- 8 Institutions may find the explanations useful for developing their own policy and for allowing some flexibility of practice at subject level, depending on local needs. It is important to emphasise that the explanations do not form part of QAA's expectations of institutional practice when QAA teams are conducting audits and reviews.
- 9 Academic staff in departments and schools do not necessarily need to be familiar with the detail of all of the various sections of the *Code of practice*, although they might well be expected to be familiar with the institutional policies it informs and any parts which are particularly relevant to their own responsibilities.
- 10 To assist users, the precepts are listed, without the accompanying explanations, in Appendix 1 of this section of the *Code of practice*.
- 11 The first version of this section of the *Code of practice* was published in July 2001. The publication of this second version follows consultation with staff in institutions, who have helped to update the *Code of practice* to take account of institutions' practical experience of using the guidance contained in its predecessor.

Introduction

- 12 This second version of this section of the *Code of practice* provides a set of precepts, with accompanying guidance, on arrangements for work-based or placement learning. The *Code of practice* is concerned with arrangements made for learning, that is a planned and intended part of an academic programme, which typically takes place outside the institution and often involves the support and cooperation of a work-based or placement learning provider. This section of the *Code of practice* is not intended to cover learning outside an institution that is not a planned part of a programme of study.
- 13 The guidance contained within this section of the *Code of practice* recognises the considerable developments that have taken place in recent years in the opportunities available for people in the workplace to negotiate, with an awarding institution and their employer, a programme of study developed from their work tasks. It also recognises opportunities for students to gain experience and learn through the work environment or to undertake a period of placement, including study overseas. Although a planned period of placement in the programme is currently a part of many higher education programmes, future opportunities are likely to enable students to integrate work and study in a more flexible way in the form of work-based learning. Foundation Degree programmes, for example, require the integration of some work-based learning. For such reasons, this section of the *Code of practice* has been expanded from providing guidance on placement learning and now includes work-based learning.
- 14 The variety of work-based learning opportunities available makes it difficult to provide a precise definition of the term. For the purposes of this publication, work-based learning is learning which is integral to a higher education programme and which normally derives, in part, from experiences in the workplace. It is learning which is usually achieved and often demonstrated through work and is intended to meet both work and personal development objectives. It can range from a student taking one module within a programme to an entire programme that has, at its core, activities designed around the individual's occupation. It can also range from being a mode of study where the named award is gained by work-based learning to a field of study where the qualification is in work-based learning. It is anticipated that awarding bodies will use the guidance provided in this section of the *Code of practice* on a programme by programme basis and in ways that are appropriate to context.
- 15 Placement learning is regarded, for the purpose of this publication, as a planned period of learning, normally outside of the institution at which the student is enrolled or generally engaged in learning, and where any learning outcomes are an intended part of a programme of study. It includes those circumstances where students have arranged their own learning opportunity with a placement provider, with the approval of the awarding institution.
- 16 An effective work-based or placement learning opportunity is one in which the aims and intended learning outcomes are clearly defined and understood by all partners, are integrated into the programme, and where the responsibilities of the awarding institution and the partners are made explicit. Awarding institutions may choose to delegate responsibility for the operational aspects of the programme to a partner, for example an employer or a further education college, but the responsibility for setting any intended learning outcomes, and ensuring that a work-based or placement learning opportunity provides adequate opportunities for them to be achieved, rests with the awarding institution.

- 17 Work-based or placement learning serves a variety of purposes. Intended learning outcomes set for a work-based or a placement learning opportunity may be highly specific. For example, they may embrace the development of practical skills and competencies that are required for practice in professional or other employment; or they may be more general, as in the development of an understanding of the cultural or employment context of an academic discipline. The workplace is also a locus for knowledge transfer and there are frequently opportunities for ensuring that the relationship between an academic programme and the work-based learning is generally interactive. The awarding institution clearly identifies and approves any intended learning outcomes that it sets, often in negotiation with all partners, and ensures that they are shared with
- 18 The types of work-based or placement learning opportunities available to students take many forms and are defined in relation to the award being sought (for example, short, extended; full-time, part-time; paid, unpaid; assessed, non-assessed; formal learning, experiential learning; studying or working abroad). The awarding institution's relationship with a work-based or placement learning provider may also vary with the nature of the learning opportunity. This may, for example, be a work-based or placement learning opportunity with a single employer; the enrolment of students on a UK award with a programme of study at an overseas university; a student-negotiated, work-based project or placement opportunity; or a student in employment on a work-based learning qualification. It may also depend on the purpose a partner has for engaging in the provision of work-based learning or placements. For example, an employer offering passive consent to an employee undertaking a work-based learning programme may have a different attitude and involvement to one that is using work-based learning as a means of improving the skills and knowledge of the workforce.
- 19 The ways in which awarding institutions discharge their responsibilities to ensure that work-based or placement learning provides appropriate learning opportunities will vary according to the nature of the work-based or placement learning. In all cases, however, responsibilities should be clear, well documented and understood by all involved, with awarding institutions identifying those aspects over which they retain control. It may be of benefit to involve the partners so that their needs and responsibilities are considered. Where institutions use an agency to secure the work-based or placement learning opportunity, they will need to assure themselves that their responsibilities for the opportunity are being met by the agency.
- 20 Work-based or placement learning opportunities that take place outside the United Kingdom (UK) involve consideration of relevant regulations and policies of other countries and in some cases regions. There will sometimes be a need to address the general principles of this section of the *Code of practice* in relation to the academic work and cultural conditions of the host country, which may require careful judgement in the interpretation and application of the precepts with regard to different national and regional contexts.
- 21 Work-based and placement learning, wherever and however organised and delivered, should widen the learning opportunities without prejudice either to the academic standard of the award being sought or the quality of what is offered to the student. Furthermore, the arrangements for assuring quality and standards should be as rigorous, secure and open to scrutiny as those for programmes provided wholly within the institution and through conventional class-based modes of teaching and learning. This may pose significant challenges to the awarding institution; additional relevant guidance may be found in other sections

of the *Code of practice*, particularly *Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, that includes flexible and distributed learning as part B.

- 22 Work-based learning and placements usually involve collaboration with other partners. The *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* covers this area in general. The present section of the *Code of practice* deals with the specific matters related to work-based and placement learning.
- 23 Other sections of the *Code of practice* that may be relevant when considering work-based or placement learning include:
- *Section 3: Students with disabilities*
 - *Section 4: External examining*
 - *Section 5: Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters*
 - *Section 6: Assessment of students*
 - *Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review.*
- 24 Other relevant QAA publications include:
- the frameworks for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and Scotland
 - the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*
 - the *Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning* and
 - the *Guidelines on preparing programme specifications.*
- 25 Guidance from other bodies is also available in the publications of, for example:
- Association for Sandwich Education and Training (ASET): *A Code of Good Practice for the Operation of the Placement Element of Sandwich Courses in Higher Education*
 - the UK council for Overseas Affairs (UKCOSA)
 - various professional, statutory and regulatory bodies
 - Foundation Degree Forward (FDF)
 - Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SEEC): *Notes for Guidance on Work-Related Learning*

Precepts and explanations

General principles

1

Where work-based or placement learning is an intended part of a programme of study, awarding institutions ensure that:

- responsibilities for academic standards and quality are clearly defined
- the intended learning outcomes contribute to the overall aims of the programme, and
- any assessment is part of a coherent assessment strategy.

Responsibilities for academic standards and quality

The design of work-based or placement learning as part of a higher education programme can involve a number of partners in addition to the awarding institution. However, setting the academic standards of a higher education award and assuring the quality of student learning opportunities is the responsibility of the awarding institution. Work-based or placement learning can take many forms and make various contributions to the award. A placement is often, for example, for a maximum of one year, but work-based learning opportunities can vary from one module to a whole award.

An awarding institution may, in negotiation with partner(s), delegate responsibility for aspects of the programme, where it has confidence that the partner has the capacity to accept and discharge that responsibility. A partner may also jointly support the student's learning in the work place or placement with the awarding institution. Such shared responsibilities can work well as long as there is clarity about who is responsible for what.

An awarding institution, together with its partner(s), may consider how devolved or shared responsibilities can be clearly organised and identified; this may be achieved through, for example, memoranda of understanding, service level agreements, the provision of handbooks for students, employers, providers, and staff, and learning contracts. Clarity about responsibilities is particularly important when student learning is taking place away from the premises of the awarding institution. The *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* is also relevant, in particular part B: Aspects specific to flexible and distributed learning.

Intended learning outcomes

The setting and testing of intended learning outcomes is an integral part of programme design. It is normally the awarding institution, sometimes working with partners, that is responsible for setting the intended learning outcomes for a programme or module. This will include consideration of the range of relevant external reference points to standards that are available, including the Academic Infrastructure (published by the QAA); the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies; National Occupational Standards; and Sector Skills Foundation Degree frameworks.

In the case of work-based or placement learning, intended learning outcomes are often negotiated between various partners and need to be flexible, depending on the particular circumstances or environment. In common with other elements of an award, it may not be possible for all students in work-based or placement learning situations to have exactly the same learning experiences. It is important however,

that they all have the opportunities to achieve the required set of learning outcomes. In circumstances where a student, who is based mostly in the workplace, is not able to meet all of the required learning outcomes from their work, it may be necessary for that student to undertake some additional tasks in another workplace or placement.

Learning outcomes can be set so that they contribute to the proper integration of work experience into a programme. In setting learning outcomes for programmes with work-based or placement learning, an awarding institution considers the extent to which that part of the programme contributes to the overall learning outcomes of the programme. This may include:

- whether the learning outcomes for the work-based or placement learning are broad enough to reflect the range of the student's experience
- whether the student has had adequate/appropriate opportunities to achieve the intended learning outcomes during the work-based placement learning and
- what impact the optional or compulsory nature of a work-based or placement learning component has on the intended learning outcomes of the programme as a whole.

The purpose of a work-based or placement learning opportunity can vary and it may not be appropriate or desirable, for good reason, to set formally identified learning outcomes for this part of the programme. For example, detailed learning outcomes may not be appropriate for an overseas placement where the main purpose of the experience is to gain a general appreciation of the culture of another country.

Successful work-based and placement experiences are often those where the intended learning outcomes are set in a manner that is flexible enough to accommodate a diversity of students and learning opportunities, and have been written with the overall aims of the programme in mind. Careful consideration of the intended learning outcomes within the whole programme can contribute to the integration of learning derived from the experience within the award.

Work-based or placement learning may also need to include outcomes aligned to specific professional practice-based standards and requirements.

Assessment

Awarding institutions, normally in consultation with their partners, determine the type(s) and frequency of student assessment in work-based and placement learning. Assessment strategies which include an emphasis on supporting student learning, as well as measuring achievement of academic standards, can improve students' learning experience.

Well designed assessment can help to reinforce the relevance of the work-based or placement learning to other parts of the programme and vice versa, giving students a range of opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes in a number of different modules. In designing a strategy for assessment in contexts where the learning and/or the assessment is 'off campus', it is important that the assessment tests the intended learning outcomes accurately and fairly. Consideration should also be given to the impact that failure or non-completion may have on reassessment opportunities and on progression and how successful completion can be achieved.

External examiners play an important part in assuring the standards of awards and the quality of the learning opportunities. Awarding institutions consider, in discussing with their partners, the role that the external examiner(s) may have in assuring the

standards and quality of the work-based or placement learning. It may be important to ensure that standard institutional practice takes into consideration the needs of an award that includes work-based or placement learning. Awarding institutions and partners may also wish to refer to the *Code of practice, Section 4: External examining*.

Students, particularly in current or recent employment, can bring a range of experience and knowledge to their studies. Awarding institutions may wish to consider the contribution and role of the accreditation of prior experience and learning in recognising learning from experiences as part of a work-based learning module or programme. Cross reference to the *Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning*, and the *Code of practice, Section 2: collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* and *Section 6: Assessment of students* may be helpful in this regard.

Responsibilities

2

Awarding institutions have in place policies and procedures to ensure that their responsibilities, and those of their partners, for work-based and placement learning are met and that learning opportunities provided are appropriate.

Individual awarding institutions and their partners give careful consideration to the development of work-based and placement learning in their programmes.

Clearly-defined policies and procedures for securing, approving and/or allocating work-based or placement learning will help the awarding institution ensure that, where applicable, the partner providing the learning opportunity can deliver appropriate opportunities and has the capacity and capability to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Partners involved in work-based or placement learning should be aware of an awarding institution's policies and procedures for meeting statutory requirements relating to relevant UK legislation including, for example, the *Disability Equality Duty 2006*. Awarding institutions may also find it helpful in their discussions to refer to the *Code of practice, Section 3: Students with disabilities*. UK legislation may have limited application in overseas work-based or placement experiences, although awarding institutions should take into account any relevant legislation appropriate to the country in question, and consider any 'duty of care'. Students on overseas placements should be advised on such matters as health and safety, the culture of the country and the need to take out appropriate personal insurance. Reference to the UKCOSA website may be helpful.

Successful work-based or placement learning generally depends on the full commitment of all partners. Sometimes, however, the work itself may not provide the learning opportunity, for example, where students are using their existing workplace principally as the 'site' for their work-based learning and their employer may not demonstrate much interest in the programme. Such circumstances need to be considered by the awarding institution and the student, to ensure that any intended learning outcomes can still be achieved.

It is sometimes necessary for a partner to terminate an arrangement. To prepare for such possibilities, awarding institutions need to plan alternative arrangements to ensure that students continue to have opportunities to achieve any required learning outcomes.

3

Awarding institutions assure themselves that work-based and placement learning providers know what their responsibilities are.

Partnerships that provide work-based or placement learning opportunities for students can be structured in various ways. However, it should be clear where responsibility lies for, among other things, the provision of appropriate learning opportunities, the health and safety of students and, where delegated by the awarding institution, any assessment of students, in all cases.

Partners providing the work-based or placement learning need clear information from the awarding institution about the objectives of the work-based or placement learning, their particular roles and responsibilities, the nature and scope of the activity involved and how responsibilities are to be fulfilled. For example, the format, frequency and mechanisms that work-based or placement learning partners should use for informing the awarding institution about a student's progress should be made clear, along with details about the mechanisms used for providing feedback to the student(s). Similarly, clarity about the mechanisms to provide feedback to the employer or provider from the institution is also important to ensure a successful partnership.

Awarding institutions do not always provide the work-based or placement learning opportunity; in such cases it is important that they are nonetheless confident that the work-based or placement learning provider(s) understands, agrees to, and is able to fulfil, its responsibilities. This may include clarification of how the awarding institution expects the responsibilities associated with each work-based or placement learning experience to be undertaken and achieved; for example, that there is adequate supervision and/or mentoring of the students, through liaison between the employer/provider and educational provider, during the work-based or placement learning. The mentoring role is an important one and any training that the awarding institution or a delegated partner could provide for mentors in the workplace is best discussed with the learning providers.

Work-based or placement learning partners need to be able to demonstrate their ability to fulfil their responsibilities under relevant health and safety legislation, taking into account the level of skill and experience of the students. The nature of the work-based or placement setting, and the student's employment status with the partner, may have a bearing on the applicable legislation and whether the awarding institution or the partner(s) is identified as the 'responsible authority'. Awarding institutions will need to identify and clarify these responsibilities and duties with their partners and seek legal advice if appropriate.

4

Awarding institutions ensure that students are made aware of their responsibilities and rights throughout their work-based and placement learning.

Students undertaking work-based or placement learning have responsibilities and rights as individuals, as well as obligations and responsibilities towards the awarding institution (or delegated education provider) and also to the work-based or placement learning provider. For example, any student undertaking a programme of study leading to an award of a particular institution is a representative of that institution and has a responsibility to act appropriately and in accordance with the expectations of the institution. At the same time, students undertaking work-based or placement learning have obligations towards the provider and its customers, clients, patients, and other employees. Students have a responsibility to meet the norms and expectations for

professional conduct in the particular field of work that they are undertaking through the work-based or placement learning. For students using their existing workplace for their work-based learning, such norms, expectations and responsibilities may be more obvious than for students joining a workplace to undertake a placement, and are often covered in a contract of employment. It is helpful for student(s) if these norms, responsibilities and expectations are clearly stated at the outset of the work-based or placement learning. This may be done at the same time as students are made aware of their rights to work in a safe environment and to be treated in accordance with applicable legislation, together with their responsibilities under statutory legislation such as the *Freedom of Information Act*.

It is likely that during the work-based or placement learning, students will take on, to an increasing extent, the responsibility for managing their own learning and professional relationships, and for recording their own progress and achievements. Awarding institutions can help students to fulfil these responsibilities by providing advice on the negotiation of any learning agreements. They can provide clear information about the level of autonomy expected and nature and scope of learning support available from the awarding institution and its partner(s), including educational providers, at different times throughout the work-based or placement learning. For example, students will want to know which partner(s) is responsible for providing academic and pastoral guidance to support their learning, perhaps through a structured and supported programme of personal development planning. This may not be the same partner that is able to, has the means to, and is responsible for, formally recording students' achievement of specific learning outcomes. To help in the process of managing their own learning, students may consider personal development planning and learning logs as a way of supporting reflective learning, and may have already started this practice under guidance in the institution.

Early warning of potential problems that may prevent a student's progress or satisfactory completion of the experience is helpful to all partners, and students will be more confident if they are aware of the procedures that they should follow and whom they should contact if such circumstances occur.

Information, support and guidance

5

Awarding institutions ensure that students are provided with appropriate and timely information, support and guidance prior to and throughout their work-based and placement learning.

Students benefit from receiving appropriate and timely information, support and guidance prior to undertaking, during and following work-based or placement learning. It is the responsibility of the awarding institution to specify the respective responsibilities of the partners in providing this.

There is a wide range of work-based or placement learning opportunities and so the type of information, support and guidance may differ according to a number of factors that can include:

- the nature of the work-based or placement learning opportunity; for example, students taking a qualification through a flexible and distributed learning route, or undertaking a placement overseas, may benefit from clear instruction, guidance and support in the use of virtual learning environment technologies, in order that they make the best use of these and can maintain effective communication with

their home institution. Students on a health-related placement may need information on particular occupational health considerations and ethical and legal aspects such as client or patient confidentiality

- the type of support and guidance: students studying while in employment may need information about the guidance and support available to them, how they can access it, who will be providing it, and the frequency that such support may be available. This may differ according to whether it is academic or personal support and guidance. Academic support can include guidance on academic performance; personal support may include technical support, counselling and, for overseas placement students, advice on the culture of the overseas location, on finding accommodation and travel information.

An awarding institution and its partners will wish to ensure that the range and type of information, guidance and support is appropriate for both the nature of the opportunity, the stage within the programme at which the opportunity is available, and the type(s) of student involved.

The needs of students differ depending on whether they are yet to begin the work-based or placement learning, are undertaking it, or have completed it. For example, regardless of whether the responsibility for securing a placement rests with the students, they can find it particularly helpful to receive timely information about writing a curriculum vitae. Students nearing the beginning of their work-based learning programme or placement will benefit from information about the amount, type and frequency of support and guidance throughout the experience. Campus-based students returning to their programme after a period of work-based learning or a placement overseas may experience difficulties and benefit from support and guidance to assist their return to the programme. Information gained from any debrief may at this time be useful for future students entering the same work-based or placement learning situation.

Information, support and guidance materials that are developed in consultation with work-based or placement learning providers are more likely to fulfil the students' needs, reduce duplication and ensure that appropriate, consistent and timely information is available to students at all stages of their work-based or placement experience. Similarly, how support and guidance will be provided can be discussed and agreed between the awarding institution, any delivery partners, the work-based or placement learning providers and, where appropriate, the students themselves.

Students may also benefit from having information provided by the awarding institution about the procedures they should follow if they have a problem or complaint about their work-based learning/placement. The *Code of practice, Section 5: Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters* can provide further guidance and examples in such cases.

6

Awarding institutions assure themselves that work-based and placement learning partners are provided with appropriate and timely information prior to and throughout the students' work-based and placement learning.

The amount and range and the format and timing of information and guidance an awarding institution provides to its partners is important. Such information may include, for example, the awarding institution's policies and procedures for securing, approving and maintaining work-based or placement learning experiences, and regulations to which students are subject. For postgraduate students particularly, this

may also include clarification of the rights to intellectual property developed during the work-based or placement opportunity, and whether or not covered by a contract of employment. Information may also include the nature and timing of any support that the awarding institution will make available to the work-based or placement learning partner, and/or to the students during the work-based or placement learning experience, as well as clear procedures for the periodic review of the progress of students, the responsibilities for informing students of the outcomes of assessment, and sources of advice and guidance on progression opportunities.

Partners providing the work-based or placement learning find it helpful to have clear information about the action to be taken if they are no longer able to offer a work-based or placement learning opportunity, as well as knowing the procedures for reporting information about students' progress to the awarding institution or delegated partner. It is good practice for an awarding institution or delegated partner to inform the work-based or placement provider about visits from the academic or support staff, and any change(s) in the students' circumstances, in advance of the programme.

Work-based or placement learning providers need clear guidance about what and to whom they should report at the end of the work placement. This should include whether and how they report on the performance of the students, as well as providing feedback on the overall experience from their perspective. Such reports typically contribute to the improvement of future relationships between partners.

Staff development

7

Awarding institutions ensure that:

- their staff involved in work-based and placement learning are appropriately qualified, resourced and competent to fulfil their role(s) and
- satisfy themselves that, where applicable, work-based and placement learning partners have effective measures to monitor and assure the proficiency of their staff involved in the support of work-based and placement learning.

Staff of the awarding institution, educational partners and those employed in the work-based or placement learning setting, all have crucial roles in identifying, developing and maintaining appropriate learning opportunities and supporting students. They need to be informed about the awarding institution's policies and procedures for assuring the quality of learning intended to be derived from the experience.

The level and mix of staff expertise required to identify, develop, maintain, monitor and evaluate an awarding institution's work-based or placement learning policies and procedures, are important. In considering such factors, awarding institutions also need to work out how their staff will be adequately informed, appropriately trained and supported to undertake their role(s), and also satisfy themselves that appropriate and equivalent arrangements are in place for staff based in partner organisations.

All staff associated with supporting students during the work-based or placement experience work better if they have clearly and explicitly defined roles, and are given appropriate training to undertake these effectively. Such training may include updating staff knowledge and understanding of relevant legislation, institutional policies and practices.

The regular sharing of good practice in work-based and placement learning, locally and nationally can be achieved, for example, through the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in work-based learning, the Higher Education Academy and specialist advisory organisations such as ASET or SEEC, FDF and the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning Work-Based Learning Network.

Monitoring and evaluation

8

Awarding institutions ensure that their policies and procedures for securing, monitoring and administering work-based and placement learning are effective and regularly reviewed.

Work-based and placement learning opportunities can be dynamic and flexible, and contribute significantly to a student's learning experience, the programmes offered by the awarding institution, and the activities of the work-based or placement provider. Regular and effective monitoring and review of work-based and placement learning opportunities helps all involved to gain maximum benefit from them.

Clear procedures which allow feedback on the quality and standards of the work-based or placement learning to be available to, and used by, all parties, enable institutions and work-based learning or placement providers to identify and take appropriate and timely action, where necessary, and provide opportunities to note effective practices.

Feedback about the arrangements and effectiveness of a work-based or placement experience may be obtained from providers in a number of ways. These can include, for example, regular meetings between the awarding institution and any delivery partners, the employer representative(s), and the students, and through questionnaires and reports on student progress. Discussion allows awarding institutions and partners to agree the most effective and appropriate methods of obtaining and providing feedback; these are likely to be most effective if undertaken at the beginning of any new work-based or placement agreement and are periodically reviewed.

Feedback from institutional staff engaged with work-based and placement learning, and also from supervisors/mentors, external examiners and students is valuable in monitoring and reviewing both the effectiveness of the institution's policies and procedures for work-based or placement learning, and also about the quality and standards of its provision.

Encouraging the supervisors, mentors and students engaged in work-based and placement learning to provide feedback on progress, and communicate any concerns in a timely way to the institution and work-based or placement partner as appropriate, enables an institution and its work partner(s) to address concerns at the earliest possible opportunity. The *Code of practice, Section 5: Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters* can provide further guidance and examples in such matters.

Appendix 1

The precepts

(Note: the precepts are printed here without explanatory text for ease of reference.)

General principles

1

Where work-based or placement learning is an intended part of a programme of study, awarding institutions ensure that:

- responsibilities for academic standards and quality are clearly defined
- the intended learning outcomes contribute to the overall aims of the programme, and
- any assessment is part of a coherent assessment strategy.

Responsibilities

2

Awarding institutions have in place policies and procedures to ensure that their responsibilities, and those of their partners, for work-based and placement learning are met and that learning opportunities provided are appropriate.

3

Awarding institutions assure themselves that work-based and placement learning providers know what their responsibilities are.

4

Awarding institutions ensure that students are made aware of their responsibilities and rights throughout their work-based and placement learning.

Information support and guidance

5

Awarding institutions ensure that students are provided with appropriate and timely information, support and guidance prior to and throughout their work-based and placement learning.

6

Awarding institutions assure themselves that work-based and placement learning providers are provided with appropriate and timely information prior to and throughout the students' work-based and placement learning.

Staff development

7

Awarding institutions ensure that:

- their staff involved in work-based and placement learning are appropriately qualified, resourced and competent to fulfil their role(s) and
- satisfy themselves that, where applicable, work-based and placement learning partners have effective measures to monitor and assure the proficiency of their staff involved in the support of work-based and placement learning.

Monitoring and evaluation

8

Awarding institutions ensure that their policies and procedures for securing, monitoring and administering work-based and placement learning are effective and regularly reviewed.

Appendix 2: The legal context and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) operates an independent student complaints scheme pursuant to the *Higher Education Act 2004*. QAA is currently undertaking a review and revision of the *Code of practice, Section 5: Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters*. QAA has consulted its solicitors Mills and Reeve and Brodies. Copies of the legal advice are available at www.qaa.ac.uk/education/roundtable/

The Advisory group will be kept informed of the progress of the review and revision of the *Code of Practice, Section 5* and make a decision regarding the appropriateness of cross-referencing to this work to section 5 or including a precept focused on 'complaints'.

Appendix 3: membership of the advisory group

Patricia Ambrose	Executive Secretary, GuildHE Limited
Janet Bohrer	Development Officer, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Helen Bowles	Policy Adviser, GuildHE Limited
Val Butcher	Senior Adviser, Higher Education Academy
Euros Evans	Manager, Careers Centre, University of Glamorgan
Professor Jonathan Garnett	Middlesex University
Pauline Gibson	Standards and Quality Adviser, Sector Skills Development Agency
Dorothy Haslehurst	Head of Quality Assurance, University of Portsmouth
Susan Hayday	Curriculum and Higher Education, Association of Colleges
Brenda Little	Senior Policy Analyst, Centre for Higher Education Research and Information
Derek Longhurst	Director, Foundation Degree Forward
Professor Valerie Maehle	Dean, Faculty of Health and Social Care, The Robert Gordon University
Sofijia Opacic	National Union of Students
Owen Richards	Academic Registrar, University of Sussex
Darren Scott	Head of Work Placement Centre, University of Leeds
Andy Smith	Head of Careers and Placement Development Unit, Bournemouth University
Lis Smith	Northwest Development Agency
Wendy Stubbs	Assistant Director, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Dr John Wilson	University of Central Lancashire