

Approved by: Senate November 2006

University Policy and Procedures on Students' External Engagement

University of Strathclyde

Policy and Procedures on Students' External Engagements

The University of Strathclyde encourages all full-time students to take advantage of a wide variety of means of gaining experience in addition to their academic studies which will enhance their employability. Such experience can add complementary skills and knowledge, while increasing students' confidence as job-seekers in the graduate labour market.

Most part-time and distance learning students acquire the benefits of such experience through their activities supplementary to their studies, but some examples of external engagement listed below may apply equally to these students.

The University supports students who engage in the following forms of discipline- or career-related experience in order to develop their skills. These are known collectively as "external engagement". Each area has a number of strands, but they have been grouped here according to their dominant feature. However, since students' primary objective is to complete their studies successfully, experience which is gained in activities outside the context of the curriculum should not be so time-consuming as to detract from academic work.

Curriculum related external engagement

Some forms of engagement are directly related to students' curriculum studies, such as:

- Study abroad integrated within the curriculum
- Work placements integrated within the curriculum – compulsory or strongly encouraged
- Group or individual projects undertaken for an employer, a University department or another organisation
- Group or individual projects based on case study material provided by employers with subsequent feedback from the employers
- Case study assignments based on an interview with a professional practitioner or an entrepreneur
- Consultancy for employers

University community engagement

Other forms of engagement relate to involvement in the wider University community, such as:

- Class representative on Staff-Student Committee
- Member of Students' Representative Council
- Office bearer or active member of a student society
- Involvement in University supported organisations – e.g. Student Entrepreneurial Network, Students in Free Enterprise
- Involvement in student organisations – e.g. Students' Association officers, AIESEC [Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales], Gala, Liaise, CACTUS [Community Action at the University of Strathclyde]
- Work as ambassadors for University departments such as Schools and Colleges Liaison Service, the Careers Service, the Alumni Office
- Paid and voluntary work in the Students' Union

Employment / career related external engagement

Students can enhance their employability by gaining experience related to either their degree course or their career aspirations, such as:

- Part-time paid or unpaid work
- Summer and longer internships
- Gap year experience before, during or after degree studies
- Work in the voluntary sector
- Involvement in a family business
- Networking with professional practitioners or entrepreneurs
- Mentoring by professional practitioners or entrepreneurs
- Work-shadowing of professional practitioners or entrepreneurs

1. Guidelines on good practice

In the interests of students and those with whom they engage in the community, the University sets out guidelines for good practice. These apply equally to various forms of curriculum related external engagement for UK and international students in the UK and abroad. The key points are summarised here with web links to the detailed guidelines.

Safety Services' policy on health and safety criteria for work placements integral to the curriculum: <http://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/policies/>

Key policies:

- Students on placement should for all health and safety purposes be treated as employees of the host organisation irrespective of whether they are paid or unpaid. Consequently, the primary responsibility for meeting health and safety requirements within a placement rests with the host employer.
- Students with special needs or with particular health problems should not be prevented from undertaking placement because of these. However, some adjustments may have to be made to working arrangements or safety procedures to take account of the student's needs.
- University Placement Organisers will take steps to ensure that students are placed in organisations which have appropriate safety policies and procedures, including generic or specific risk assessments.
- Placement Organisers will consider any risks associated with the placement by reason of its location.
- Students on placement are required to:
 - attend any safety briefings (before and during placement);
 - read and retain Health and Safety Guidance Notes and other information provided by the University and the employer;
 - complete and return the Induction Checklist within the first week of the placement;
 - inform the Placement Organiser immediately of any concerns about health and safety while on placement;
 - report any accident or incident to the Placement Organiser.

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Working Group on Placements for Disabled Students

Key policies:

- Departments should review course marketing literature and class/module descriptors to assess whether these could be more informative about placements for disabled students.
- Departments offering courses involving placements should seek and maintain records of placement opportunities incorporating features likely to be important to future disabled students.
- Departments with responsibility for placement students should arrange briefing and discussion sessions for placement providers or share the University's guidelines with placement providers on relevant policies.
- Departments should review existing procedures for liaison with placement providers to check whether these fit the additional needs of a disabled student on placement.
- All students should be given the opportunity by the placement organiser to disclose information about a disability before matching students to placements.
- The usual matching process should only be altered for a disabled student where needs relating to their disability might otherwise not be met.
- There should be discussion with disabled students in advance of placements about monitoring arrangements which will allow the University to ensure that any additional placement needs are being met.

The Guidance notes in which these recommendations are made are available on request from the Disability Service <http://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/policies/>

Student Employment Service policies on vacancies accepted for advertising and conditions of employment: <http://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/policies/>

Key policies:

- Part-time and casual vacancies may be advertised up to a maximum of 15 hours per week during semester.
- The Student Employment Service places no limit on the maximum number of hours to be worked with regard to summer vacancies.
- All vacancies must comply with Minimum Wage, Equal Opportunities, Disability Discrimination and Age Discrimination legislation.
- Commission only vacancies may not be advertised as part-time vacancies during semester as the number of hours the student may be required to work cannot be guaranteed to be 15 or less.
- Unpaid placement and/or work experience opportunities may be advertised at the discretion of the Careers Service.

Placements for international students

International students may undertake a work placement which is approved by their institution as a required part of their degree / diploma course as long as the placement does not extend beyond the duration of their course. Further information is available at <http://www.ukcosa.org.uk/images/workduring.pdf> .

2. Support for students seeking external engagement

Depending on the nature of external engagement sought, students can find support from the following sources:

Academic departments

- Placements integral to the curriculum
- Projects for external organisations as part of the curriculum
- Permission for time out for an internship not required in the curriculum

Hunter Centre

- Networking, mentoring and work-shadowing via the Strathclyde Entrepreneurial Network
- Personal effectiveness training – e.g. via Students in Free Enterprise [SIFE]

International and Graduate Office

- Advice on study abroad

Student Employment Service

- Part-time work
- Summer and longer internships
- Other vacation employment
- Voluntary work
- Advice on working as a student

Careers Service

- Support with CVs, applications and interviews
- Resource centre materials on employers, voluntary organisations and study abroad

Students' Association

- Advice on volunteering and part-time / vacation work opportunities
- Advice on working as a student

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Alumni Office

- Mentoring and work-shadowing with alumni

Disability Service

- Advice on disability issues affecting compulsory placements or study abroad

Student Finance Office

- Advice for students facing financial difficulties regarding compulsory, unpaid placements

3. Academic credit for external engagement

Academic credit will be given for external engagement which is a mandatory requirement within the curriculum. Information on credit in specific courses is given in departmental handbooks and websites.

4. Assessment

Guidelines on Assessment and Feedback leading to the award of qualifications are given at <http://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/policies/>

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5. Communication between staff and students

Departments which provide formal opportunities for students' external engagement outline in their handbooks or websites the roles and responsibilities of departmental staff, students and external opportunity providers.

6. Disclosure

It is anticipated that external agencies working with young or vulnerable people will require students to undertake the Enhanced Disclosure Scotland process. The University requires all applicants who have been offered a place on courses in the Faculty of Education to complete a Scottish Criminal Records Office (SCRO) Disclosure Application. This may apply also to courses in other Faculties where students will contact children or vulnerable adults. The administration of the Disclosure process varies from course to course depending on the timing of any placement element. Students will be contacted by the relevant course administrator when they are required to undergo the process.

The University has an established policy on the acceptance of students with convictions. This is issued to students who indicate a previous criminal conviction on their University application forms. However, whilst the University can make a decision whether to admit a student with a criminal conviction, for certain courses, there are related professional organisations which graduates must become members of in order to practice. The relevant professional organisation is responsible for making a decision on the suitability for membership of candidates with criminal convictions on successful completion of their studies.

Students who undertake voluntary work and who will be in contact with children or vulnerable persons will be required, by the organisation which engages them to undergo the Enhanced Disclosure process. Only organisations which are authorised to do so can ask for Enhanced Disclosure and this is carefully monitored by Disclosure Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Executive. Enhanced Disclosure has to be initiated by the organisation, completed by the student and checked and signed by the individual. The requirement for payment for this process will vary between organisations. Enhanced Disclosure provides detail of all convictions and also provides "any other relevant information". Data held on an Enhanced Disclosure certificate is available to the individual and to the "employing" organisation and need not be shown to any third party. The Disclosure Certificate is valid only for the organisation which requested it and so if the student works for several organisations, several disclosures may be required.

7. Student Personal Development Planning

All forms of external engagement can be recognised as part of students' Personal Development Planning [PDP]. Although academic credit is not always awarded for PDP, the process of reflection on and recording of skills development through academic study and other experience is regarded by all departments as a crucial part of every student's development through their university education. The PDP record is the basis for students' CVs and can provide information for students to pass on to academic referees.