

Guidance for Students on Placement

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1. Overview

Under health and safety law, students on work placement are to be treated as employees of the placement provider. As such, the placement provider has primary responsibility for the health and safety of the student whilst on the placement and should be managing any significant risks.

This guidance is aimed at students who are about to undertake a placement at a location that is not under university control. It aims to explain the general health and safety arrangements which a student should expect to see whilst on their placement.

2. Definitions

None apply

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1. Your supervisor

Your placement supervisor should provide you with information on the safe working arrangements that apply to the work you are undertaking.

They should do this by giving you an induction when you start your work placement. The induction should include health and safety issues, such as:

- Full information on the employer's health and safety policy, including your responsibilities as an employee and the procedures you should follow.
- Any particular risk associated with the work you will be doing.
- Advice on whether any personal protective equipment (PPE) is required, how to access it and any associated training
- The welfare facilities available to you
- Any restrictions that apply to your activities or the location at which you will be working
- Arrangements for lone working, if applicable. If there are no written procedures, the supervisor should verbally explain them.
- Information on the action to be taken in the event of an emergency or injury.
- If there are no written procedures, the supervisor should verbally explain the arrangements.

3.2. Students

Whilst on placement, you must follow the safe working arrangements put in place by your employer.

You must also report any accidents or incidents, both to your employer and to the University.

The link to the Universities incident reporting tool can be found here:

[Accident/Incident Reporting and Investigation | Health & Safety | University of Greenwich](#)

4. Guidance

Your supervisor should explain the arrangements specific to your workplace. The below is provided as general guidance to support this.

4.1. Electricity

When using electrical equipment make sure that you:

- Understand any particular instructions for using the equipment
- Always switch off at the mains before connecting or disconnecting any electrical appliance
- Do not use and report any damaged electrical equipment, cables or extension leads

4.2. Fire

Due to the variety of work which is carried out and the type and layout of buildings in which students may be on a placement, it is not possible to produce a set of detailed instructions that cover every emergency situation which may arise. Each employer should have emergency instructions relating to their premises and every building should have notices displayed setting out the procedure to follow in case of fire.

If you need to contact the emergency services by telephone the following information should be provided:

- Who you are
- Where you are – the location and telephone number
- The nature of the emergency and what services are required- Fire, Ambulance and/or Police
- Exact location of where the assistance is required

The location of the incident should be clearly defined; ‘the workshop’ will not mean anything to the emergency services controller. Use the correct name of the street/road and building name /number. Also provide the postal code if known

4.2.1. Fire Precautions

Most fires can be prevented by following routine precautions, some of which are set out below. When a fire occurs, the principal hazard to people is the smoke and fumes generated, most deaths from fire are due to asphyxia by smoke.

Doors in dead-end corridors, doors leading onto stairwells and doors leading to/from high fire risk areas such as workshops and laboratories are fire doors, these doors are designed to minimise the spread of fire and smoke, allowing the remaining corridors and stairs to be used for evacuating the building. Walls of corridors have a specified fire resistance so that the fire can be contained in a limited section of the building.

Smoke detectors and break-glass call points must not be interfered with or obstructed by stacked furniture, boxes or equipment. Access to break-glass call points must be maintained at all times.

4.2.2. Means of Escape

Corridors, stairways and fire exits must not be obstructed; they must be kept free of combustible material and fire doors kept closed. Make sure that all fire exits are unobstructed so that they are immediately available for use in an emergency.

4.2.3. Fire Extinguishers

Do not attempt to use an extinguisher unless you have received appropriate instruction and training and if it is safe to do so.

Good judgment and training is essential in deciding the lengths to which first-aid fire-fighting is pursued, always err on caution. Portable fire-fighting equipment is not designed to cope with extensive fires and it is important that first-aid fire-fighting should cease and the location should be evacuated as soon as the effects of fire threaten the means of escape; the building structure, or otherwise indicate that it is out of control.

- Before attempting to fight a fire always ensure the alarm has been raised and ***your means of escape remains clear, should the fire escalate out of control.***
- You should be certain of the correct fire extinguisher to use and have received instruction in its use. In a laboratory situation or attempting to extinguish a burning liquid, using the wrong type of extinguisher can turn a minor incident into a major disaster.
- Carbon dioxide extinguishers should be used with care. They can reduce the oxygen content of the atmosphere in a confined space to a dangerously low level and cause frost burns if held wrongly.
- Whenever fire-fighting equipment has been used an immediate report should be made to the supervisor so that the equipment may be recharged or replaced.

4.2.4. Fire Doors

Fire doors may be installed throughout buildings so as to prevent fire, smoke and hot toxic gases circulating along routes to safety. These doors will have 'Fire Door' signs attached, they must not be wedged or propped open. They must be kept closed at all times after access and egress has been affected.

4.2.5. Fire Instructions

Fire action instructions should be contained in the Emergency Procedures document for the organisation. They should also be displayed on notices in all buildings. These instructions should indicate the action to take in the event of a fire alarm or discovering a fire.

Fire alarms should be tested weekly at the same time and day. Alarms outside of this regular testing must be treated as a genuine fire and the building should be evacuated, do not wait to be told to evacuate by a fire warden/marshal. On leaving the building proceed to the designated 'fire assembly point' to help ensure that the premises have been properly evacuated.

Buildings must not be re-entered following a fire evacuation until instructions to do so have been given by the person in charge, this may be a fire officer or the person in charge of the assembly point.

4.3. Hazardous Substances

You can tell a substance is hazardous, if it displays a red and white warning symbol on its label or packaging. Some examples are shown below:



When using or working with hazardous substances:

- Follow any instructions given by your employer
- Read the procedures and precautions for using a substance
- Read any hazard warning signs and the instructions on the containers
- Find out what you need to do if there is a spillage or contact with skin, eyes, fumes or if it is ingested
- Do not transfer any substance into unlabelled or wrongly labelled containers
- Wear any personal protective equipment required

4.4. Lifting and Carrying

Injuries from lifting and carrying can be painful and debilitating.

Always use any equipment provided such as trolleys where provided to move material.

Take care to:

- Only lift and carry what you can easily manage
- Make sure you can see where you are going
- Obtain assistance with anything that may be too heavy or awkward to manage on your own
- If in doubt, don't do it – ask for help

4.5. Noise

Noise can cause damage to hearing, reduce efficiency or merely cause annoyance.

Continuous exposure to excessive noise levels can produce deafness. Impairment to hearing may pass unrecognised for a long period of time due to the chronic (long-term) nature of the effect. Damage to hearing can also result from a sudden violent sound such as a loud explosion which can cause the rupture of an ear drum. For advice on noise problems at work you should consult the Organisation's Health and Safety Officer.

4.6. Working Outside of Normal Hours

Many organisations have rules regarding working outside normal hours.

For many offices, 08:00 hrs to 18:00 hrs Monday to Friday are considered normal hours. Any hours outside of this, including all day Saturday, Sunday, Bank Holidays and other official holidays, are usually regarded as outside of normal hours.

Someone from the management team at your workplace should give you their explicit authority before you begin working outside of normal hours. Even if trained to do so, it should be forbidden to perform operations deemed hazardous by the employer, or their nominee, unless some other person is within calling distance. There should be an 'Out-of Hours' and/or 'Lone Working' procedure(s) for this type of work.

This restriction should also apply to carrying out any experimental work, except where permission is given for certain types of experiment and prior permission has been given by the Head of the Section or their nominee for the particular work involved.

5. Further information

5.1. Related HSE Guidance:

Further general guidance on employers and employees duties can be found on Health and Safety Executive (HSE) web pages: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/index.htm>

5.2. Related University documents:

- [HSS/HS/031 – Induction checklist for student placements](#)

6. Document History

Details of previous reviews are as follows:

Review Date	Reviewer	Summary of Review
Mar-2015	Central H&S Unit	General review – no changes made
Sept-2017	Central H&S Unit	Section added for accident / Incident reporting
2017-2023	Central H&S Unit	Annual reviews – no changes made.
Sep-2024	Vikki Wood Associate Director of H&S	Transferred to new document template and updated to current web accessibility requirements. No significant changes to content.

This document will be reviewed at least annually.