

## ASET Viewpoints

### Making Effective Placement Visits

Whilst it is not a mandatory requirement stipulated by ASET or the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), visiting students during the course of their placement can offer benefits to all parties involved. Many factors need to be considered before agreeing a policy on making visits. These may include:

- Resources (time, people and financial)
- Consideration of the benefits of visiting in comparison to the costs (time and financial)
- Location of the placements (local, national, international)
- Whether or not a pre-placement safety visit is required, as these may take place prior to the commencement of the placement to carry out a visit for a risk assessment. See the ASET Good Practice Guide for Health and Safety for Students' Placements (2016) for more information.

#### Clearly communicate expectations regarding placement visits

Clarity is crucial when managing expectations; there are a number of ways to do so and the most appropriate and relevant may be dependent on the nature of the programme. Once a policy on placement visits is determined, a statement detailing the following should be readily available to all parties involved in the placement:

- Frequency
- When
- Location
- Who will visit
- Duration
- Purpose of the visit

#### For visits to be effective and fit for purpose

- Be clear on whether the student or the Placement Practitioner is responsible for organising the visit and ensure that visits are agreed in advance, rather than ad hoc, with details communicated to all parties. If any work in progress is to be discussed at the visit, be clear about what this is
- Be clear about the purpose of the visit and what will be discussed; typically this will be a progress check on the student's role, placement assessment and skills development. Encourage all parties to share any topics or problems they wish to raise in advance, to enable appropriate preparation for the meeting
- Allow adequate time, and be clear on timings. Decide whether to have a collective meeting or separate one-to-ones for the employer, and the student
- Ensure any questions raised on the visit are answered in a timely manner with follow up action taken and reported on



- Ensure there is a system in place for completing any necessary paperwork during or after the visit, and for tracking progress and signature collection

To the employer, the visiting Placement Practitioner is the face of the Higher Education Provider (HEP), and staff should be prepared to provide contact details or information about other HEP opportunities which may be of interest to the employer.

If physical visits are not possible, make use of the wide range of technology available to conduct a virtual visit. Virtual classroom software, video conferencing and software applications that enable video chat and audio calling are readily available through HEPs and enable good contact to be maintained between students, employers and placement practitioners.

## Advantages of placement visits

### For the student

- Maintains/reinforces the connection with their HEP throughout their placement and enables them to feel supported
- Facilitates conversations about their role, skills development, future employability and provides an opportunity to resolve any difficulties they may be experiencing
- Placement practitioners can signpost students to HEP resources or services which may be useful in their current role

### For the Higher Education Provider

- Enables deeper and stronger relationships to be developed with employers which can lead to further activities including knowledge transfer partnerships (KTPs), research, more placements for other programmes/schools
- Promotes good relationships with students, which may be positively reflected in student feedback at module or programme level, or institutionally in the National Student Survey

### For the Employer

- Affords an opportunity to meet the HEP and Placement Practitioner, sometimes for the first time
- Can allow future conversations to take place more openly and honestly than through virtual means or telephone calls alone

### For the Placement Practitioner

- Offers a real connection to the student and an opportunity to see the working environment whilst checking on progress with assessment requirements
- Can allow future conversations with the student and the employer to take place more openly and honestly than through virtual means or telephone calls alone
- Provides an opportunity to meet the employer, perhaps for the first time

*ASET is the Work Based and Placement Learning Association, and our aim is to advance the prevalence, effectiveness and quality of work based and placement learning in Higher Education by promoting research into that system of education and publishing the useful results thereof. Work based and placement learning is that which is part of the Higher Education experience, an integrated part of a programme of study, and that is structured to appropriate learning outcomes and assessment.*

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**For more information please contact:**