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The BASES Position Stand on Curriculum-based Work Placements in Sport and Exercise Sciences

Produced on behalf of the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences by Lisa Board, Edward Caldow, Dr Lance Doggart, Dr Zoe Knowles FBASES, Michael Pye and Dr Craig Twist.

Introduction

A rapidly changing economy, a competitive funding environment and the demand for graduate level employment in a volatile labour market all serve as a reminder to ensure graduate employability remains a key priority. Future graduates must therefore develop marketable, tangible, employment-related skills that are of immediate relevance to employers.

BASES remains strongly committed to the enhancement of graduate employability and is delighted to release a Position Stand for Curriculum-based Work Placements. BASES defines work placements as “*curriculum-based work-related learning opportunities, integral to a programme of study (undergraduate and postgraduate), embedded within a framework of clearly defined learning outcomes, opportunity for assessment, reflective practice and achievement of academic credit.*”

The aim of the Position Stand is to offer a valuable and user-friendly resource to guide students, practitioners, employers and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) towards creating and experiencing quality work placements. Curriculum-based work placements play a vital role within professional education. Organised and managed well, they smooth the transition of future graduates into the challenging world of work, offering mutual benefits to students, employers and HEIs (see Table 1). The Position Stand complements and draws from current good practice guidelines published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and ASET (asetonline.org).

Mutual benefits of curriculum-based work placements

BASES perceive curriculum-based work-related learning opportunities for the sport and exercise sciences as a mutually beneficial, three-way contract between the student(s), the University/College and the Placement Provider. Ideally, curriculum-based work placements involve engagement with a work place environment but are not restricted to this. Fundamental to a curriculum-based work placement is a Placement Learning Agreement (see Box 1), negotiated, approved and signed by all parties. Beneficial curriculum-based work placements will provide a range of opportunities for students to augment their academic, personal and professional development and increase their chances of gaining and sustaining, meaningful employment in the future.

Effective placements

Placements and work-related opportunities provide a vibrant learning platform for undergraduate and postgraduate students from Level 4 through to Level 7 and their respective duration of study i.e., 3 or 4 years. Placements must have clear learning outcomes related to programme/module aims and the number of learning hours must be compatible with the credit value of the module. Learning hours should comprise pre-placement preparation time, delivery time (contact time with the employer), post-placement reflection and evaluation and time for supervisory meetings throughout all of the above. A maximum hours' ratio of 3:1 (preparation to delivery) is recommended.

Where placement opportunities are offered at Levels 4 and 5, these might focus more on the development of generic, employability skills that investigate possible future career areas and enhance employment prospects. Suitable employment-related opportunities for Levels 4 and 5 include self-awareness, integrating students in observational practice, team work, reflective practice and action planning activities. It is recommended these be recognised as compulsory components of the learning programme to ensure engagement with key work-related skills. At Level 6 optional placements for students should be provided with specific opportunities to apply theory to practice in a safe and engaging work-based environment, whilst continuing to enhance employment potential. From this a framework of placement provision progression could also recognise and reflect student interest and entrepreneurship opportunities across the Levels.

Academic Departments considering integration of placements into their curriculum should actively source, and engage with, suitable employers to identify, develop, and secure meaningful work experience opportunities. This could be accomplished at local and regional

Table 1. Benefits of curriculum-based work placements

Student	Placement providers	HEI
<p>Career decision-making ‘Try and test’ a job or industry to clarify personal career goals or aspirations.</p>	<p>Recruitment opportunity Access to a diverse, energetic, creative, ambitious and talented labour market with new ideas and fresh ways of thinking i.e., knowledge transfer.</p>	<p>Enhanced graduate employability Raise profile of HEI, enhance student retention and recruitment.</p>
<p>Professional and transferable skills Apply skills and knowledge in a real work environment.</p>	<p>Engagement in local community Presents a positive and ethical company image.</p>	<p>Engagement in the community Combined academic and employability agenda for up-skilling workforce. Promotion of HEI in local community.</p>
<p>Networking Opportunity to develop professional industry contacts.</p>	<p>Strategic management and workforce planning Opportunity to access and align talent to meet organisational mission and objectives.</p>	<p>Forge strong links with local employers and stakeholders Facilitates ‘industry-informed’ and ‘industry-centred’ curriculum design and developments.</p>
<p>Business/Organisation awareness Gain real business awareness and essential insight into organisation operational processes, practices and challenges.</p>	<p>Contribute to local economic and social development Reduce unemployment and contribute towards secure and sustained permanent employment in the future.</p>	<p>Contribute to local economic and social development Raise knowledge, skills and aspirations.</p>
<p>Personal development Develop self-confidence, self-belief and self-awareness.</p>	<p>Staff development Nurture managerial capabilities of current employees through supervision and/or mentoring.</p>	<p>Employability skills and experience embedded in curriculum Better prepare students for world of work.</p>

Table 2. Good practice guidelines/responsibilities for all parties involved in sport and exercise science work placements

	Student responsibility <i>Individual or group</i>	Placement provider responsibility	HEI responsibility <i>University tutor or work placement coordinator</i>
Pre-work placement	<p>Establish contact with the placement provider to discuss and confirm the potential role(s) you will engage with.</p> <p>Ensure appropriate DBS and other checks (e.g., inoculations/vaccinations) required by placement provider are in place</p> <p>Complete pre-placement documentation as required, which should cover insurance, health and safety and acceptance of roles in conjunction with the development of the Placement Learning Agreement*.</p>	<p>Actively promote placement opportunities through mechanisms within HEIs.</p> <p>Be conversant with the nature of student placement requirements specific to their degree and assessment.</p> <p>Ensure relevant risk assessments completed is indicative of supervision, health and safety, duty of care, intellectual property rights and insurance in line with host and HEI requirements.</p> <p>Be conversant with the Placement Learning Agreement*</p> <p>Provide a named contact/supervisor for the placement experience.</p>	<p>Assess and approve the suitability of the placement and confirm it is specific to sport and exercise sciences.</p> <p>Appoint a designated University tutor contact with skills and knowledge commensurate to that of the Placement Learning Agreement.</p> <p>Develop a Placement Learning Agreement* between, and specific to, the three parties to include: link to module learning outcomes; insurance and liability; roles and responsibilities; risk and health and safety; ownership and disposal of information/data obtained through the placement.</p>
During work placement	<p>Attend placement as per the Placement Learning Agreement and schedule.</p> <p>Engage with placement in all appropriate aspects.</p> <p>Mirror the professional nature of the placement with regard to personal integrity.</p> <p>Maintain a log/diary of attendance, activity, assessment tasks and reflective observations.</p>	<p>Provide all resources for the student to complete the placement e.g., time, facilities, equipment, supervision, health and safety, duty of care through induction processes.</p> <p>Provide regular progress meetings with the placement student(s) (formative feedback).</p> <p>Liaise with the HEI as appropriate</p>	<p>Support the student and placement provider through regular contact, updates and feedback on all aspects of the Placement Learning Agreement.</p>
Post-work placement	<p>Reflect and review specific transferable and employability skills in relation to the Placement Learning Agreement, assessment and module learning outcomes.</p> <p>Debrief with peers, placement provider and University tutor This may be through case studies or a presentation on an element of the placement.</p>	<p>Provide feedback (summative) on the student specific to the Placement Learning Agreement, assessment and module learning outcomes.</p> <p>Debrief with University tutor and student</p> <p>Complete post-placement evaluation to the HEI for future programme development.</p> <p>Provide a reference for the student, if appropriate.</p>	<p>Reflect and review the quality of the placement in terms of specificity and suitability on all aspects noted in the Placement Learning Agreement.</p> <p>Debrief with student and placement provider</p> <p>Collate feedback from student(s) and placement provider.</p> <p>Make feedback available for scrutiny for internal Boards and external examiners.</p>

* See Box 1

Box 1. The Placement Learning Agreement

This could/should contain the following key information as appropriate: Personal details of the placement provider, student and HEI contact; Exact dates of placement to include the start and finish dates and any specific intermissions in the placement duration; Supervision arrangements including generic roles and responsibilities of all parties; Learning hours linked to the placement duration; Nature of the placement in relation to the student role; Learning objectives and outcomes of the associated credit bearing module and specific to the nature of the placement; Evaluation process during and post the placement; Acceptance of any relevant rules and regulations as required by the provider and the HEI; Applicable risk assessment processes for both the provider and HEI; Confirmation of Employer and Public Liability insurance; Signature and date of agreement of all relevant parties; Information relating to remuneration, if appropriate. There is no legal obligation for the student to be remunerated if the placement is for no longer than one year and is directly related to their further education or higher education course. However, a placement provider might wish to reward the student's hard work and effort - this might be done by payment, giving the student access to some normal staff benefits, e.g., use of gym facilities, and/or the payment of reasonable travel expenses to and from the work place.

networking events where industry partners are present. HEIs should also work towards designing standard templates for flyers, e-mails and social media sites to be sent to prospective partners containing key information about the format, structure and expectations of placements. These can be a useful mechanism to promote the Department and the prospective courses, relevant to Level, more widely.

Placement responsibilities

An overview of recommended responsibilities, at each level of involvement, and an associated timeline for a successful placement in sport and exercise science is presented in Table 2. The information is not exhaustive but provides guidelines for consideration by all parties involved in the provision.

Conclusion

Given the integral role of work placements as part of taught degree programmes, BASES has sought to provide a resource that will ensure a quality experience for all those involved in the process. Incorporating guidelines set out by relevant agencies (QAA, AGCAS, CIPD, ASET), this Position Stand outlines good practice for the student, placement provider and higher education institute involved in delivering the placement. BASES recommends that those people engaged in work-based learning in sport and exercise sciences refer to the information provided in this Position Stand. Well managed placements should ensure good working relationships between employers and HEIs, as well as enhancing the currency of sport and exercise science degrees and those completing them. ■

Student

“Through participating in the module I have been able to set up links with different Primary schools, which could well prove to be beneficial to me further down the line.”

*Andy Collier, undergraduate student,
University of St Mark and St John.*

“The experience you gain on a student placement gives you a competitive edge when applying for a job.”

*Holly Johnston, postgraduate student,
Liverpool John Moores University.*

“It has certainly helped my confidence in as much as I know I have something to offer.”

Jon Bateman, undergraduate student, University of Sunderland.

Provider

“Placements allow students to develop their experience alongside their studies and part time jobs...ensure we are at the forefront of evidence based practice...it is a partnership that allows us to deliver the best sport science support as well as developing students to work in this industry in the future.”

Mark Quinn, Head of Sports Science, Wigan Warriors.

“Students have the opportunity to understand the clinical aspects of exercise testing and prescription on high risk populations within a rehabilitation setting. The benefits for [us] include; keeping up-to-date with the latest research findings, [maintaining] good links with the local colleges and universities, completion of small projects for the service...and mentoring experience for staff.”

*Zoe Evans, Exercise Physiologist,
Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital.*

Higher Education Institutions

“Placement opportunities are vital to undergraduate and postgraduate provision. [We] actively engage employers, teams and charitable organisations to secure suitable opportunities for the personal and professional development of students, with great emphasis being placed on securing relevant placements/internships to both their chosen degree and target career...The importance of providing placements cannot be overstated.”

Dr Steve Atkins, Division Leader for Sport, Exercise and Nutritional Sciences, University of Central Lancashire.



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Resources

The BASES Position Stand on Graduate Internships.
Available: www.bases.org.uk/BASES-Position-Stands

www.agcas.org.uk

www.asetonline.org

www.cipd.co.uk

www.prospects.ac.uk

www.qaa.ac.uk

www.skillset.org

Supported by:

ASET - ASET welcomes BASES guidance to practitioners about providing an excellent placement experience for sports and exercise science students. Our own Good Practice Guide, produced in collaboration with the Quality Assurance Agency, is available by contacting our office on aset@asetonline.org

British Association for Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation

English Institute of Sport

SkillsActive

Sport and Recreation Alliance

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